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No. 55.

CAPTAIN SWIFT

A Comedy Drama in Four Acts

BY

C. HADDON CHAMBERS

AUTHOR OF: "THE IDLER," "THE TYRANNY OF TEARS," ETC., ETC.

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CAPTAIN SWIFT.

Produced at the Haymarket Theatre, London, 20th June, 1888, with the following cast:

MR. SEABROOK, Elderly Gentleman.....Mr. H. Kemble
HARRY SEABROOK, His Son, in love with Stella.....
.....Mr. Frank Gilmore
GARDINER, From Queensland, Harry's friend, in love with Mabel.....Mr. F. H. Macklin
WILDING (Captain Swift).....Mr. H. Beerbohm Tree
MARSHALL, Seabrook's butler, and foster-brother of Wilding.....Mr. R. Pateman
BATES, Seabrook's Footman.....Mr. Robert Harwood
RYAN, Queensland Detective in search of Wilding
MRS. SEABROOK, Wife of Mr. Seabrook, also mother of Wilding.....Lady Monckton
MABEL SEABROOK, Her Daughter.....Miss Agnes Millar
STELLA DARBISHER, Her Niece.....Mrs. Tree
LADY STAUNTON, Her Sister.....Miss Rose Leclercq

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CAPTAIN SWIFT.

ACT I.

SCENE:—MRS. SEABROOK'S *drawing-room, London. Charmingly furnished and arranged. Evening, after dinner.*

(*Enter* MARSHALL *from* R., BATES *from* L.)

MAR. (*To* BATES) Serve the coffee in here. The ladies will be here in a minute.

(LADIES *laugh off* R.)

(*Exit* BATES L.)

Mr. Wilding seems to be amusing them. (MARSHALL *moves about stage putting things in order*) A real interesting gentleman that—got something to talk about—knows how to talk. Been everywhere, seen everything, all-round accomplished. I seem to have seen him somewhere before. From Australia—ha! I wonder if he ever met my precious foster-brother out there. He went out to those parts. I'd like to ask hir.. (*As* LADIES *enter. is up* C.)

(*Enter* MABEL SEABROOK *and* STELLA DARBISHER *from* R. STELLA *first crosses* L., MABEL *to* L. C.)

MABEL. Mr. Wilding is very amusing.
STELLA. I think he is interesting.

(*Enter* MRS. SEABROOK R.)

MRS. S. Send coffee, Marshall. (*Sits on settee* R.)
MAR. Yes, ma'am.

(*Exit* MARSHALL L.)

MABEL. Now, mamma, tell me all about him. (*To* C.)

MRS. S. (*Who appears slightly disturbed*) About whom, dear?

MABEL. Mr. Wilding, of course!

(STELLA *up to piano.*)

MRS. S. I can tell you nothing—I know nothing of him.

(STELLA *is running her hand over the keys of the piano.*)

MABEL. You know nothing of him?

MRS. S. No. Your papa met him somewhere and asked him to dinner. I heard nothing of it till this afternoon.

MABEL. We were to have dined alone to-day for a change.

MRS. S. (*Aside—reflectively*) It is strange—very strange!

MABEL. Do you like him? (C.)

MRS. S. (*Aside*) I wish Betty could see him.

MABEL. Mother, do you like him?

MRS. S. I don't know, Mabel.

MABEL. Stella, I needn't ask you. (*Moves up a little*)

(STELLA *at piano* L.)

STELLA. Why not?

MABEL. Because you hung upon his words.

STELLA. Not so bad as that quite, but I confess I found him interesting. Did you?

MABEL. A little. Mysteries are always interesting.

STELLA. Mysteries?

MABEL. Yes. Who is he?

STELLA. A Mr. Wilding.

MABEL. One Wilding—that's very enlightening. We knew that already—but no more.

STELLA. A travelled and accomplished gentleman.

MABEL. One Wilding—a fascinating person. Any more?

STELLA. Yes. (*Rises and comes down to arm chair* L.) Your father's guest. (*Sits chair* L.)

MABEL. Now you are angry! A sign that he has interested you *very* much. Please forgive me—(*Sits footstool* L.)—but I'm afraid I don't like him.

STELLA. Why not, pray?

MABEL. Because I hate having one guest to dinner—

nobody else gets listened to—and because I intended to ask papa to take us somewhere this evening—and because he seemed to depress mother.

MRS. S. You are mistaken, dear. I agree with Stella that Mr. Wilding is very interesting. I—think I shall like him very much—only——

STELLA. Only what, Auntie? (*Rises and crosses to* MRS. SEABROOK R.)

MRS. S. There is something strange about him.

MABEL. There is! (*Rises.*)

MRS. S. Perhaps it is his voice. He conveys the odd impression of one speaking from a distance.

STELLA. He talks of Australia, which is a long way off.

MRS. S. (*Aside*) A distance of time.

MABEL. (*Crosses up* C. *to* R.) Do not trust him, gentle maiden.

STELLA. (*Crosses* L. *to fireplace*) You are absurd!

MRS. S. (*Aside*) It is very strange! If Betty could see him she would remember. Mabel, do you know what your Aunt Betty is doing to-night?

MABEL. I think she's at home—nursing Sir John's gout. (*Up* R.)

MRS. S. (*Aside*) I'll send for her. (*Rises, goes* R. *and sits at writing-table*)

MABEL. Mother, are we going to Fernshawe?

MRS. S. (*Without looking up*) Yes—on Monday.

MABEL. (*To* STELLA) Do you know how long we're to stay? (*Crosses to* L. C.)

STELLA. (L. *of piano*) I heard Uncle insisting on a week at least. He says we want dosing with fresh air and exercise.

(*They talk*—STELLA *above piano,* MABEL *below her.*)

MRS. S. (*Aside—writing*) "My dear Betty—do please come round for a few minutes if Sir John can spare you. I want you to see some one who troubles me."

(*Enter* MR. SEABROOK R., *who is short sighted*)

MABEL. Now, papa, we have got you. (*Gets on his* R.)

(STELLA *on his* L.)

MR. S. Only for a moment. I am going to smoke with Harry and Mr. Wilding.

(*Exit* MRS. SEABROOK *with letter* L.)

(*They bring* MR. SEABROOK *down between them.*)

MABEL. Now who is he?

MR. S. (*Turning towards* STELLA) Now, my dear Mabel——

MABEL. (*Turning his face with her hands*) This way for Mabel. Who and what is Mr. Wilding?

(MABEL *pushes* MR. SEABROOK *on the couch next* STELLA *and sits on his other side.* ALL *sit on settee* R., MABEL R., SEABROOK C., STELLA L.)

MR. S. Mr. Wilding is a gentleman of—er—I believe excellent family, of which he is the sole survivor.

MABEL. What is he?

MR. S. Mr. Wilding is, I believe, a man of independent means who has spent the greater part of his days in travel.

MABEL. You *believe* a great deal about him, but what do you *know?*

MR. S. Mabel! Remember that——

MABEL. Where did you meet him?

MR. S. I had the honour of making Mr. Wilding's acquaintance——

MABEL. Well?

MR. S. No, I had—er—er—— Dear, dear! where had I—— My memory grows worse and worse!

MABEL. Do you really mean, papa, that you can't remember where you met Mr. Wilding?

MR. S. Just for the moment.

MABEL. How long have you—er—had the honour?

MR. S. About three weeks, I think. (*Reflectively*) Now, where was it? (*Going*) I must ask him to remind me. (*Turning* C.) Oh, of course!

MABEL)
&) Yes?
STELLA.)

MR. S. You remember my famous cab accident last month?

MABEL)
&) Yes! (*Still sitting.*)
STELLA.)

MR. S. Well, it was Mr. Wilding who saved me at the risk of his own life. It was a terrible moment! Some street band made the horses bolt. The driver was thrown from the box, and off we went—the horse and I—at a

furious pace down Oxford Street—bound for another world. And I verily believe we'd have got there but for an impetuous young man who sprang from the pavement right to the horse's head. Still the horse bolted, and still the young man kept a tight hold, being dragged along for about thirty yards. I thought he'd be killed, but when I had the courage to open my eyes, there he stood at the cab door, smiling and ready to help me out.

STELLA. Splendid! (*Goes a little* L.)

MABEL. That makes me warm towards him. (*Up to* MR. SEABROOK)

STELLA. I should think so!

MR. S. Yes, he saved my life. (*Going up to* R.)

MABEL. And then? (*A little up* R. C.)

MR. S. Then—— Let me see, we went somewhere for refreshments. (*Crosses* R. *at back*)

MABEL. And after that? (*Following* MR. SEABROOK *up*)

(*Enter* MRS. SEABROOK R.)

MR. S. Lunched with me at the club next day. A charming fellow, as you see! By the way, I've invited him down to Fernshawe next week.

(*Exit quickly.*)

MABEL. Papa! There!! (*At door* R.)

MRS. S. Asked him to Fernshawe! (*Coming down* C.) Have you heard who he is?

STELLA. It was he who saved Uncle's life in that dreadful cab accident. (*By piano* L. C.)

MRS. S. That should be sufficient recommendation. (*Crosses to* L.)

MABEL. Papa is the most confiding, unsuspicious person in London. (*Sits on ottoman* R.)

STELLA. Mr. Wilding saved his life. (C.)

MABEL. I like him for that—but not for himself.

STELLA. You are inveterate.

(MRS. SEABROOK *sits in chair* L.—STELLA *sits at piano* L.)

MABEL. Papa's indiscretions would be amusing if they weren't sometimes alarming. Just before you came to live with us—(*To* STELLA)—he brought a man to lunch one day simply because, having met him in the underground railway and got into conversation with him, he discovered the interesting circumstance that their polit-

ical views were the same. The gentleman's name was Jobbs.

MRS. S. I'm sure, dear, Mr. Jobbs was a most harmless and respectable person.

MABEL. So is our cook, but we don't ask her to lunch. As for your Mr. Wilding——

(*Enter* HARRY SEABROOK R., *comes down* C.)

(MABEL *rises.*)

Ah! now we shall have another opinion. Harry, answer one plain question, please—do you like Mr. Wilding?

HARRY. No. (C.)

MABEL. (*To* STELLA, *standing* R. C. *above settee*) There's a man's opinion for you.

STELLA. (*Smiling*) A boy's. (*Aside*)

MRS. S. Why not, dear? (*In chair* L.)

HARRY. (*Moves towards his mother* L. C.—MABEL *back of settee*) Because I don't know him, never heard of him, and don't understand him. There's something queer about him. He's not like the men one is accustomed to meet.

STELLA. Is originality so great a sin then? (*Crosses to* R. *of* MABEL *and sits on settee* R.)

HARRY. (*Irritated*) Oh! then we must be careful of attacking him since he's already found so able a champion.

(MABEL *rises and passes to back of* STELLA.)

STELLA. (*Confused*) I'm not his champion.

HARRY. (C.) You find him original. Why, any common——

MRS. S. Hush, dear! He saved your father's life.

HARRY. Yes, I've heard that story. But surely a fiver——

MRS. S. Harry!

(STELLA R. *on settee with* MABEL *at back.*)

HARRY. Well, of course I don't mean that the governor's not worth more than that, but bringing into the house a complete stranger about whom you know nothing, and who may reasonably enough be nothing but an adventurer, is a serious thing.

MABEL. (*Aside to* STELLA) Especially when the house contains an heiress.

HARRY. Honestly I don't like Mr. Wilding.

MABEL. (*Aside*) Poor Harry is jealous already. (*Goes up stage* R.)

HARRY. Fortunately my friend George Gardiner will arrive from Australia in a day or two. He may know something about this Wilding.

STELLA. Australia is a large place.

HARRY. Yes, but Wilding is great on Queensland experience, and, as a Queensland squatter, Gardiner is not at all unlikely to have met him. However, as I suppose we shan't see much more of Mr. Wilding——

MABEL. Won't we, indeed! Don't flatter yourself on that score.

HARRY. What do you mean?

MRS. S. Your papa has asked Mr. Wilding down to Fernshawe.

HARRY. What! Asked an unknown, mysterious, suspicious——

WILD. (*Spoken partly off*) Yes! I assure you I'd have given my right hand for a brandy and soda then.

STELLA)
&) Hush!
MABEL.)

(*Voices outside* R. HARRY *goes to piano* L. *Enter* WILDING *and* MR. SEABROOK.)

MR. S. Ha, ha! No doubt! I should like you to hear that story, my dear. (*To* MRS. SEABROOK)

WILD. No, no—I shall end by boring Mrs. Seabrook with my stories.

(*Enter* BATES *with coffee* L.—MARSHALL *with letter on salver.*)

MRS. S. On the contrary, I should be delighted to hear it. (*Still seated*)

(MARSHALL *hands* MRS. SEABROOK *letter.*)

(MABEL *assists* MR. SEABROOK *to chair* R. *up stage.*)

WILD. Mr. Seabrook asked me just now if I had ever suffered from thirst.

MABEL. (*Aside to* MR. SEABROOK) Fancy asking a *man* that!

MR. S. Hush! (*Sits.*)

WILD. (C.) The question reminded me of what I

suffered once in North Queensland—the never, never land, as they call it.

(BATES *hands* WILDING *coffee and then exits* L.)

WILD. We were tramping, a gold miner and myself, through the bush from some gold diggings to the nearest township. On the second day of our march we found that we had missed the track. We were lost!

STELLA. (*Who throughout shows great interest*) Lost! (*On settee* R.)

WILD. Lost, Miss Darbisher, in a wilderness of parched bush. (*Up* C.)

STELLA. How dreadful!

HARRY. My cousin is readily moved by romance.

MRS. S. You mean by suffering, Harry.

WILD. The terrible part of it was that we had no water. The rivers and creeks were all dried up—the heat was fearful—the ground was hard and dusty. Very soon our faces were scorched, our tongues were parched and swollen, our lips were cracked—we could scarcely drag one foot after the other—as we wandered about in different directions looking for the lost track. I remember well that I had given up all hope when I lay down under a tree to die. Then I remember the music of the horses' hoofs and the voices of the passing horsemen who saved me.

MRS. S. And your comrade?

WILD. Poor fellow! We found him close at hand—he was dead.

(HARRY *noticing* MARSHALL *who has been secretly listening with intense interest, rises*)

HARRY. Marshall!

WILD. What?

MAR. I beg your pardon, sir—— (*Moving towards* L.)

WILD. I wasn't aware I mentioned any name.

HARRY. You didn't. I was speaking to the servant. (*Comes down* L. C. *a little—aside*) That seems queer!

MABEL. (*Advances a little between* WILDING *and* HARRY) What a funny coincidence. The man's name then was——

HARRY. Marshall, it seems. (*Crosses* R. *up stage with* MABEL)

MAR. (*At door* L., *listening*) Marshall!

WILD. The man's name, if I remember rightly,—— (*Moves across* L. C. *a little down*)

MR. S. I think you mentioned the name Marshall to me, Wilding.

WILD. Then it must have been Marshall, or something of the sort. However, it doesn't matter as the man is dead.

MAR. (*At door—aside*) My precious foster-brother, perhaps. Yet he wasn't the sort to die of thirst.

(WILDING *near* MRS. SEABROOK. STELLA *rises and goes round* R. *of settee.*)

(MARSHALL *exits* L.)

HARRY. (*To* MABEL.) What short memories these imaginative people have! (*Back* C.)

MABEL. Very!

(STELLA *gets up to* C. *back*)

WILD. (*Aside*) I was a fool to tell that story.

MR. S. (*Coming down to* WILDING *on his* R. STELLA *joins* MABEL *and* HARRY) Harry, you must really try and be more polite to——

MRS. S. To Stella. But this is Mr. Wilding, James.

MR. S. (*Aside*) Whew! A narrow escape! (*Goes* R.)

(MABEL *down to him—and leads him to seat* R.)

MRS. S. (*To* WILDING) Young people are never happy unless they are quarrelling and making it up. But you should know their way better than I, Mr. Wilding, for you are one of them still—certainly not more than—— (*With a secret anxiety*)

WILD. Not more than twenty-five.

(STELLA *and* HARRY *together back.*)

MRS. S. (*Aside, half rising in agitation*) Twenty-five!

WILD. I must be going, Mrs. Seabrook.

MRS. S. You are not going to leave us yet, Mr. Wilding, or I shall think you find us very dull. You have not seen the billiard room. Harry is quite a champion player and I have made him teach the girls. It is such good exercise. Harry, you will play Mr. Wilding a game of billiards?

HARRY. Delighted! (*Down on* WILDING'S R., *below him*)

(*As he goes down,* STELLA *across* L. C. *at back.*)
(WILDING *goes up to* MABEL—HARRY *comes down* C. STELLA *down* C.)

(*To* STELLA) Why are you angry with me?

STELLA. I am not angry with you, although you have been a little rude.

HARRY. I am sorry, but I hate you to be so interested in—in——

STELLA. In any one but yourself? (*Moves down* L.)

HARRY. (L. C.) I was not going to say that. But I didn't think you would like anyone I disliked.

STELLA. Didn't you really? Now, Harry, please tell me when and where it was that I entered into a compact to regulate my likes and dislikes with yours?

HARRY. Oh! if you take that tone, I have nothing more to say. If the sight of a new face can—— (*To* R., *then goes up* C., *to* MABEL)

WILD. (*Crossing to* C.) Miss Darbisher, Miss Seabrook insists on backing her brother. Won't you back me?

HARRY. I hate him! (*Up* R.)

MABEL. (*To* HARRY) Beat him if you love me—give him a good sound drubbing!

HARRY. I'd like to.

(*Exeunt* BOTH.)

WILD. (*To* STELLA) Won't you be induced to back me?

STELLA. I must see how you play first.

WILD. I promise you I play a bold game.

(*Exeunt* BOTH.)

(MR. SEABROOK *in arm chair asleep.*)

MRS. S. (*Soliloquizing*) It's strange, very strange! Betty can only decide as I have: that this Mr. Wilding bears a most startling resemblance—(L. *of piano*)—to—to him,—the man who would have been my husband had he not died. The face—the strange, pale eyes—the bearing—the voice—all so like, so like! Something in the manner, too—mysterious, but impenetrable. It can only be a coincidence—but what memories his presence arouses. Something like a shock comes to me when I look at him or when he speaks. Why is that? (L. C.) Only the shock of memory, I suppose—rudely awakened from a long sleep.

(*Walks room, sees her husband, stands before him.*)

My husband—my good husband! The man with the golden heart! God bless him. I'd sacrifice my life before his happiness—before I would allow his faith in his wife to be shaken. Betty should be here by now. I must talk with her alone. (*Leans over the back of her husband's chair*) James! James!

MR. S. (*Drowsily*) My love, among your host of virtues, I regret that that of permitting me to enjoy the leading article——

MRS. S. I want you to go to the billiard room, dear, to keep the young people in order. Harry is so hasty, and he seems to have taken an unreasonable dislike to Mr. Wilding. I shouldn't like him to be rude to your friend.

MR. S. I'll go—though I'd rather stay here.

MRS. S. Is that a compliment to me or the arm-chair?

MR. S. Honours are divided. I dozed off because I was happy and comfortable. You made me happy.

MRS. S. And the arm-chair made you comfortable?

MR. S. Exactly! (*Rises*) Now where are my glasses?

(*The glasses are hanging down his back.* MRS. SEABROOK *passes them over his shoulder and puts them on for him.*)

MRS. S. Why! here they are.

(MR. SEABROOK *kisses her hand.*)

MR. S. Thank you, dear. How clever you are! How clever you are!

(*Exit* R.)

MRS. S. I am ashamed to practise even so slight a deception on him. Yet from the first I have hidden away from him just one thing which might have made so much difference. It was cheating him out of his confidence, winning it under false pretences. I could never bear to lose it now. I prize it too dearly. I cannot—I *will not* lose it. (R. C.)

(*Enter* BATES L.)

BATES. Lady Staunton.

(*Enter* LADY STAUNTON, L.)

(*Exit* BATES L.)

MRS. S. (R. C.) I am delighted that you were able to come.

LADY S. John swore furiously at my desertion. You know how—er—vigorous his language is during these attacks? However, your note was so imperative and so mysterious that I bore his abuse with my fingers in my ears—and—here I am, dying to hear what you want me for. (*Sits* L.)

(MRS. SEABROOK *shuts doors* R. *and comes down* L.)

MRS. S. Betty, James brought a stranger here to dinner to-day.

LADY S. That's not unusual! James does that sort of thing. A man?

MRS. S. Yes.

LADY S. You may thank your stars it wasn't a woman! What sort of man? Anything strange about him?

MRS. S. Yes. (*Standing* R. *of* LADY STAUNTON.)

LADY S. Ah! Some of your husband's casual friends *are* a little——

MRS. S. Betty, this man is like *him!*

LADY S. (*A little startled—slowly*) Like whom?

MRS. S. (*After looking round to be sure they are alone*) Like Harold Gage. (*Kneels*)

(*Pause.*)

LADY S. You know I never allow that subject to be mentioned between us.

MRS. S. I know that. But this man——

LADY S. We agreed that his name should be buried with him, and deep as his grave we buried the memory of your unfortunate attachment.

MRS. S. Remember I should have been his wife.

LADY S. Had he lived. But it was better that he should die. He was a strange impossible man.

MRS. S. Like this man.

LADY S. This man?

MRS. S. The man who is here to-night—Mr. Wilding. He is that one over again.

LADY S. A chance likeness.

MRS. S. But it is so startling! You will own it when you see him. And his age is twenty-five.

LADY S. Twenty-five.

MRS. S. Might it not be fate?

LADY S. Fate! Stuff and nonsense! There is no such thing. You are nervous and imaginative.

MRS. S. At that terrible time, Betty, you acted without consulting me.

LADY S. I acted for the best. When you confided in me—I resolved to save you. No one knows what occurred. The secret is locked in our own hearts.

MRS. S. But the poor child?

LADY S. My dear Mary, it was reared by honest people. What more could a child have? Everything that could be done for the boy was done. You were distracted when he ran away from school and disappeared. I looked upon it as an act of providence. Still we made every inquiry, and there's no doubt that what we heard was true—that he stowed away on board some ship bound for Australia. I've heard Australia is a splendid country for boys.

MRS. S. Betty, this man comes from Australia.

LADY S. So do many people.

MRS. S. It was wicked to disown the poor little one.

LADY S. It was wise.

MRS. S. (*Rises*) No, no! It was wicked. I have often felt it—when I have been alone. It has given me many a sleepless night, it has come back to me suddenly with a shiver in moments when I have been happy with my husband and my children, it has pursued me secretly, but remorselessly—this one thought—this one cruel question—where is my boy?

LADY S. You may be thankful that you can't answer the question. The whole affair was very unfortunate: but it is old enough to be forgotten. Why don't you forget it?

MRS. S. I can't, Betty, I can't! The wrong was too great to forget. To have thrown my child into the merciless arms of the world. How could I have done it! But I was ill—scarcely conscious—and you——

LADY S. (*Rises*) I saved you—your reputation—your honor—perhaps your life. There was no other way. (*Crosses up* C. *to* R., *down* R. *back of settee and then sits on settee*) You are just a little ungrateful, dear.

MRS. S. I am sorry! Forgive me. But I should not have permitted my little one to be sacrificed for me. I should not have been persuaded by you to marry James without telling him the truth. That was my worst fault. (*Crosses to* L.)

LADY S. You owed it to me to keep the affair secret.

The loss of your reputation would have reflected upon me as your sister. I was determined you should not lose it —and I am still!

MRS. S. My punishment will come. (*Goes up* C.)

LADY S. (*Sits* R.) Nonsense! You are a little out of sorts, that's all. You may be sure that boy has prospered, leading a free open life in the new world—much happier than he would have been in this hot-house civilization of ours—and much healthier.

MRS. S. (*Comes down to* L. *of* LADY STAUNTON) If he should be the boy, Marshall might recognize him.

LADY S. I think not. He was too young when he disappeared. Still it was indiscreet to choose the Marshalls to have the child sent to. They had been our tenants for generations, and in these little affairs one can't go too far from home.

MRS. S. But they never guessed the child's parentage.

LADY S. Of course not! But had I been you, I should never have taken a Marshall into my service afterwards. However, no harm has come of it—or ever will. And now we have had the wretched old skeleton out and shaken his bones, let us lock the cupboard again—and throw away the key.

MRS. S. But this Mr. Wilding——

LADY S. I will see him.

(*Enter* BATES L.)

BATES. Mr. Gardiner.

MRS. S. Mr. Gardiner? Oh! of course—Harry has been expecting him. Show Mr. Gardiner up.

(*Exit* BATES L.)

(*To* LADY STAUNTON) You remember Mr. Gardiner who was here last year?

LADY S. The Queenslander squatter? Oh yes—another Australian! He must have some attraction here to return so soon. I remember now that he and Mabel——

MRS. S. Mabel is a child.

LADY S. Ah! I've discovered you again. What inveterate match-makers mothers are! But your pet scheme with regard to Harry and Stella—is that progressing?

MRS. S. I think so. Stella is a lovable girl, and——

LADY S. And an heiress.

MRS. S. You know I never think of such things. But Harry is very devoted to her.

(*Enter* GARDINER L., *shown in by* BATES MRS. SEABROOK *rises and goes up a little to* C. LADY STAUNTON *rises*)

MRS. S. (C.—*shaking hands*) I'm delighted to see you back, Mr. Gardiner.

GAR. Not more delighted than I am, Mrs. Seabrook. How do you do, Lady Staunton?

(*Shakes hands.*)

LADY S. Well, thank you. It's unnecessary to ask how you are—you're fresh from the ocean.

GAR. Yes, we only landed at Plymouth this morning, and I hurried on by the first train. (C.) I couldn't resist the temptation of calling on you at once, though I risked finding myself in the way.

(*All sit.*)

MRS. S. Not in the least! By the way, I must congratulate you on your narrow escape. Harry read me your letter about your encounter with the bushranger. Is he caught yet?

GAR. Indeed he's not, and is not likely to be, I'm afraid.

LADY S. A bushranger? An anachronism surely!

GAR. Oh dear no! We had a real live bushranger at large in Queensland last year. A certain Captain Swift. I ought to know, for he stole the finest horse I ever owned, and on one occasion he held a pistol in my face for several anxious moments.

LADY S. How exciting! And he has not been captured.

GAR. No—but he will be if he is alive, which I begin to doubt. These gentlemen, Lady Staunton, never manage to escape from the country. They are either captured by our mounted police, or driven further and further into the interior by the pursuit, die in the end of thirst or starvation.

MRS. S. Poor wretches!

LADY S. They must be mad to enter such a life with the certainty of being caught.

GAR. I think most criminals are more or less mad.

(*Warning for curtain.*)

MRS. S. (*To* LADY STAUNTON) Mr. Gardiner is a psychologist. (*Rises, moves* C.)

LADY S. Psychology in the bush! (*Laughs*)
(*All rise.* MRS. SEABROOK C. GARDINER *crosses to her.*
LADY STAUNTON *goes back of stage and down to* L. *of* MRS. SEABROOK.

MRS. S. By the way, did you ever meet a Mr. Wilding in Queensland?

GAR. Wilding—Wilding? I may have—but I don't remember the name. What was he?

MRS. S. I am not sure—but he was at the gold mines, I believe.

GAR. If he'd been a bullock driver I might have known him, but I never suffered from an attack of gold fever.

(*Enter* MABEL *and* HARRY R.)

MABEL. To let him beat you! It's too bad! But he plays well.

HARRY. Like a professional. (*Seeing* GARDINER) Look! who is that?

MABEL. Ah! (*Appears delighted*)

(LADY STAUNTON *in chair* L.)

HARRY. Well?

MABEL. I'd know that back anywhere.

HARRY. Why, it must be——

MABEL. Of course!

(GARDINER *turns* C. MRS. SEABROOK *to* LADY STAUNTON—*they talk.*)

HARRY. Gardiner!

GAR. That's the man!

HARRY. My dear fellow, how are you? I am delighted——

(*Shake hands.*)

GAR. And you, Miss Seabrook? (*Crosses to her.*)

(HARRY *moves a little* R. C.)

MABEL. How do you do, Mr. Gardiner?

(*Enter* MR. SEABROOK *simultaneously.*)

MR. S. Gardiner! (*Joins group, coming between* HARRY *and* GARDINER) This is a pleasant surprise!

(*Looking at* HARRY) Ah! (*Shakes hands with* HARRY.)

How extremely well you are looking! (*Mistaking* HARRY *for* GARDINER)

GAR. (*Turning him round*) I'm glad you think so.

(HARRY *goes up.*)

MR. S. (*Having put on glasses and looked at* GARDINER) You are indeed! (*Aside*) Very nearly made a mistake. (C.)

(MABEL *and* GARDINER *go up to* HARRY. MRS. SEABROOK *up behind piano.* LADY STAUNTON *rises, comes* L. C. HARRY, GARDINER *and* MABEL *get over* R.)

How are you, Betty? (*Shakes hands*)

(*Comes down, crosses to* LADY STAUNTON *glasses off. To* LADY STAUNTON *in an affectionate manner*—LADY STAUNTON *crosses* R.)

We must have Gardiner with us at Fernshawe, dear.

MRS. S. Certainly, dear—ask Mr. Gardiner down.

(MR. SEABROOK *up to group at back.*)

WILD. (*Off*) I told you I played a good game.

(MRS. SEABROOK *goes up to* LADY STAUNTON.)

MRS. S. He is coming. Look well at him and tell me——

LADY S. Control yourself, dear. It's interesting, but can make no difference.

(*Enter* WILDING *and* STELLA, *who walk straight to piano* L. *well up.* GARDINER, HARRY *and* MABEL *are* R. MR. SEABROOK *going to them.* MRS. SEABROOK *and* LADY STAUNTON *on ottoman well down* R. C. *After* STELLA *and* WILDING *enter,* MR. SEABROOK *sits up* R. C.)

STELLA. I'm afraid I've been letting my music get old-fashioned. Will you choose something?

LADY S. The figure is not unlike.

MRS. S. But the face—wait!

(WILDING *turning over music, his back to all but* STELLA.)

WILD. These are all new to me—and after all the old songs——

MR. S. We expect you at Fernshawe next week, Gardiner.

WILD. (*Aside*) Gardiner! (*With fear*)

GAR. I shall be delighted to run down after Tuesday. Your soft English scenery is a refreshing relief after our melancholy bush.

WILD. (*Aside*) The bush! Good God!

(STELLA *has continued to turn over the music, not noticing* WILDING.)

HARRY. (*Bringing* GARDINER *across* C.) By the way, I must introduce you to a brother Queenslander.

STELLA. (*With music*) Do you know this?

(*As he does not answer, she looks up, and seeing his expression is afraid.*)

HARRY. Mr. Wilding, let me introduce——

(*Pause.*)

(WILDING *still with his back turned.*)

WILD. Will he know me? No—impossible!

(*Then with an effort he composes his face and gathering himself together slowly turns.*)

MRS. S. (*To* LADY STAUNTON, *with subdued excitement*) Look!

HARRY. Mr. Wilding—Mr. Gardiner. But perhaps you have met before.

(LADY STAUNTON *raises her eye-glasses and looks at* WILDING. *A pause, during which* GARDINER *and* WILDING *look at each other*—WILDING *smiling.*)

WILD. I have of course heard of Mr. Gardiner, as every Queenslander has—but this is the first time I have had the good fortune to meet him.

(*Enter* MARSHALL *with lighted candelabra—comes down back of piano.*)

(HARRY *goes back again.* WILDING *awaits reply anxiously.*)

MRS. S. Well?
LADY S. The image!
GAR. No—I've never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Wilding before.
WILD. No—never before.

(WILDING *turns to piano and meets* MARSHALL'S *eyes as* MARSHALL *places candelabra on piano.*)

GAR. (*Aside*) Yet I know that voice!

ACT II.

OPENING MUSIC.

SCENE—*Exterior of* MR. SEABROOK'S *Country House "Fernshawe." A terrace very handsome and picturesque.* STELLA *discovered in hammock with book. Enter* MABEL C. *from* L., *comes down behind* STELLA *puts her hand over her eyes.*)

STELLA. Mabel!
MABEL. I'm so dull. Harry is sulking, Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Wilding are in the stables, and you are reading; what have you there? (*Down* R. C. *of* STELLA)
STELLA. Adventures. (*Without looking up*)
MABEL. In Australia?
STELLA. Yes.
MABEL. Particularly in Queensland, perhaps
STELLA. Partly.
MABEL. Probably lent you by——
STELLA. No, I found it in the library.
MABEL. And probably chose it because——
STELLA. Exactly.
MABEL. Seems interesting; what sort of adventures are you at now?
STELLA. (*With playful awesomeness*) Bushrangers!
MABEL. Awful! Stella, do you like Queenslanders?
STELLA. I only know two, they seem very nice.
MABEL. One of them is—but the other——
STELLA. The other? Oh, I think Mr. Gardiner——
MABEL. The other means Mr. Wilding. Mr. Gardiner we know, he is quite an old friend. But Mr. Wilding, (STELLA *quickly returns to her book*) Oh, very well, if you won't listen, but please don't say I didn't warn you. (*Crosses* R. *sits on seat.*)

(*Enter* GARDINER *and* WILDING C. *from* L.)

GARD. You're a good judge of horseflesh Wilding. (R. C.)

WILD. Not better than you are. I used to hear that you bred the finest horses in Queensland. (L. C.)

GARD. Well, I have raised some fairly good cattle.

WILD. Miss Darbisher seems absorbed.

MABEL. Yes,—she's a deep student. (R.)

WILD. Of what?

MABEL. Bushrangers.

(WILDING *starts violently*—GARDINER *watches him.*)

GARD. (*Aside*) Ah! that startled him.

STELLA. (*Holding up book*) Australian adventures.

WILD. (*Recovering himself*) Interesting people, Bushrangers, Miss Darbisher.

GARD. (*Looking at Wilding*) Very!

STELLA. Have you ever met any?

WILD. No I've never had that honour.

GARD. Talking of Bushrangers reminds me that the finest horse I ever owned was stolen by a Bushranger.

WILD. Indeed!

GARD. A fact, I assure you, by no other than Captain Swift.

WILD. Captain Swift! Ah! I've heard of him.

GARD. Of course you have, and, as you say, a blood-thirsty ruffian he was.

WILD. (*Starting up*) I said nothing.

GARD. No, I beg your pardon, perhaps you are right. He was not so bad as he looked.

WILD. (*Deliberately*) You must be the better judge of his looks and character than I, since you appear to have met him, whilst I labour under the disadvantage of never having set eyes on him in my life.

(*Helps* STELLA *out of hammock*)

MABEL. (*To* GARDINER) Is he caught yet?

GARD. No—I'm afraid he must be dead.

WILD. So I've heard.

GARD. Really—that's interesting, may I ask who was your informant?

WILD. (*Coolly and deliberately looking at* GARDINER) A certain Mr. Jones. (*Turns to* STELLA)

GARD. That's indefinite. (*Crosses* R. *to* MABEL)

MABEL. So is Mr. Wilding.

GARD. Don't you like our friend? (STELLA *sits* L.)

MABEL. Do you?

GARD. Immensely. After all, Wilding, you mustn't be

severe on poor Swift. I'll describe an incident in his career which shows him in very favourable colours. (*Crosses* C.) Now suppose for a moment you are Swift. (*Business with hunting crop*)

WILD. And what are you supposed to be?

GARD. Ah! I offend you.

WILD. Not in the least. I'm never offended by—small things.

(*Sits* R. *of* STELLA.)

GARD. (C.) Well, I'll tell the story without illustration. I was riding to the station one night with my pockets crammed with bank notes with which to pay my shearers next day. It was a very dark and very lonely bush ride. Suddenly I heard horses' hoofs on the track behind me. I knew in an instant that they belonged to "Starlight", the famous black horse that Swift had stolen from me, and that it was useless for me to fly; so I pulled up. In a few moments Captain Swift was alongside.

MABEL. Had you met him before?

GARD. No. I didn't know him—nobody did. No one knows now, I think, who he really was, nor has anyone knowingly seen his full face, for he always wore a mask.

WILD. A mask eh? What a curious thing, to wear a mask.

GARD. Well, he pulled up with revolver in his hand, and asked politely enough for my money. I should mention that he wore a beard at that time. (*Looking at* WILDING)

WILD. Then you have seen him since?

GARD. No, but he may have shaved, you know.

WILD. Oh yes, of course, he might have shaved.

GARD. Have a cigar, (*hands cigar case*) I should also mention that he had a strange voice.

STELLA. What kind of a voice?

GARD. Well—like—like——

WILD. Thanks. (*Handing back cigar case.*)

GARD. Like—I can't describe it. (*Crosses* R. C.)

MABEL. What did you do?

GARD. You shall hear. I was unarmed. I held a large sum of money—nearly two thousand pounds, with which I didn't care to part.

STELLA. And? (*Rises and crosses* C.)

GARD. I refused to hand it over. (STELLA *crosses* R. *behind seat*)

WILD. (*To* STELLA) You see, Mr. Gardiner is a hero!

GARD. Not a bit of it.
WILD. Give me a light, will you?

(GARDINER *holds cigar to give* WILDING *a light.*)

GARD. And I'll tell you why, Wilding. Swift was as close to me as you are, holding up his pistol and looking straight at me with his pale eyes; and I could see in his eyes as plainly as I can in yours that whatever his crimes, he was incapable of murder. I was only brave because I knew he was unable to kill me.
MABEL. And didn't he?

(*Seated* R. WILDING *sits* L. *in hammock.*)

GARD. No, he didn't, Miss Paddy. He couldn't frighten me out of the money, so he disappeared.
MABEL. That was nice of him.
GARD. *Now* you see, Wilding, why I am so interested in this Captain Swift.

(STELLA *goes up* C., *still reading book.*)

WILD. He would doubtless be very flattered—if he knew. (L.)
GARD. Perhaps he does know. I owe him my life.
MABEL. I can't see that. If you owe your life to everyone who doesn't kill you, your debt is pretty heavy.
GARD. (*Sits by* MABEL) Suppose, Miss Seabrook, you were swimming in the ocean and a shark came along and announced his intention of gobbling you up, but on second thoughts went off without doing so, wouldn't you be somewhat grateful to the monster?
MABEL. No, I should bear him a grudge for frightening the wits out of me.
WILD. (*To* GARDINER) Then you don't think so badly of this—Swift?
GARD. I think there must be some good in him.
MABEL. There can't be much good in a thief!
WILD. A thief, Miss Seabrook!
MABEL. Yes. A highwayman is only a romantic thief.
GARD. Swift wouldn't have stolen your pocket handkerchief, but he rode into a small township one day, with his mask on, of course, got off his horse and coolly walked into a branch of the Queensland National Bank. No one dared interfere with him, and raising his hat to all the women he passed he had always the manners of a gentleman, you know——

MABEL. What a bushranger!

GARD. Why not, a bushranger is not always the ruffian depicted by a penny novelette; this Swift, for instance was a bit of a student. Gentleman Bill, they called him.

WILD. Gentleman Bill—eh? What a rum name.

GARD. Anyhow he rode away with the air of a prince and £15,000 in his pocket. (*Rises, crosses to* WILDING) What can he have done with the money, Wilding?

(MABEL *rises and goes up* R. *to* C.)

WILD. I wonder! (*Lying back in hammock.*)

GARD. And as you say, he wouldn't have much chance of spending it in the bush. (*Goes up* C. *to* MABEL)

(STELLA *closes book and rises. Enter* HARRY C. *comes down to* STELLA. GARDINER *up to* MABEL, STELLA *down* L. C. *as* WILDING *moves to* C.)

WILD. (*Rises*) No! He suspects me, but he can know nothing, and I'll silence even him.

(WILDING *moves to* C. *as he speaks, meeting* HARRY *as he enters.* GARDINER *and* MABEL *up* C. *a little* L.)

(*Looks at* HARRY) How are you?

HARRY. How are you?

WILD. I'm not safe here. (*Goes up to* C. *behind tree*)

MABEL. (*To* GARDINER) Oh, I promised to take Papa for a walk.

GARD. Let me help you.

MABEL. Perhaps he'll object. (*Crosses to* L. *of* GARDINER.)

GARD. Let us ask him.

(EXEUNT *both* C. *to* L. WILDING *strolls up round tree, and follows* MABEL *and* GARDINER *off*)

STELLA *comes down to* R. *followed by* HARRY.)

HARRY. (*To* STELLA) You've been very cool to me for the last few days.

STELLA. What nonsense! Why should I be? (*Crosses and sits* R.)

HARRY. I don't know, I'm sure I haven't deserved it. But let us forget, let us be the same again. (*Sits arm of seat*)

STELLA. Willingly.

HARRY. That's splendid. I've been quite miserable—supose we have a gallop before lunch. You can run in

and put your habit on; it won't take you a minute, and I'll have the horses saddled. (*Going up* C. *quickly*)

(WILDING *re-enters up* L. C.)

STELLA. (*rises, not very willingly, but seeing* WILDING *sits again.*) But you forget, we've arranged to ride in the afternoon, and I am so anxious to finish this book.

HARRY. Or to talk to Mr. Wilding. (*Coming down to her*)

STELLA. Now you are absurd.

HARRY. How eagerly you throw over an old friend for a new one.

STELLA. It's natural when the new one is a sensible man, and the old one a rude boy.

HARRY. Did you mean that, Stella?

STELLA. Yes, I dislike rude people.

HARRY. And I hate fickle women. (*Crossing* R.) And scheming adventurers.

(*Exit* R. 1 E.)

(WILDING *comes down behind seat.*)

WILD. (*Leans over seat*) You like adventures, Miss Darbisher—

STELLA. Yes, I wonder you don't write yours.

WILD. (*Aside*) Humph! They are not worth it, and they are over now. (*Sits* R. *corner of seat*)

STELLA. You will not travel any more.

WILD. I am tired of wandering.

STELLA. I should have thought it too interesting a life to give up without a struggle.

WILD. It wouldn't cost me a struggle. I began to realize that there are dearer prizes in life than novelty.

STELLA. What could have more charm?

WILD. Home!

STELLA. Home!

WILD. Yes, if one could find a home.

STELLA. You surprise me.

WILD. It has been in my heart for years, this longing for a place—a little world all mine. It means someone to love—someone to love one. (*Rises and crosses* C.)

STELLA. That is a humble ambition, everyone reaches it.

WILD. Not everyone. I have never had a home. I have been alone all my life. All my people died when I was young. I have never been loved—I have never dared to love—until now. (*Looks at her furtively*)

STELLA. Until now?

WILD. And now I dare not speak it.

STELLA. (*With affected lightness*) Why not? (*Rises and crosses* L)

WILD. Nowadays before a man permits himself to fall in love, he should be in a position to satisfactorily answer two questions.

STELLA. What are they?

WILD. Number one—what are you? Number two—what have you?

STELLA. You are cynical.

WILD. And how could I meet those questions. Who am I? A wanderer; with no living kith or kin. What have I? Property—none. Money—well—yes——

STELLA. A woman who loved you wouldn't ask such questions.

WILD. A woman who loved! A woman who loved me, might save me.

STELLA. From what?

WILD. From myself. From despair—do you think I could find such a woman?

STELLA. (*Going* L.) I think, Mr. Wilding——

WILD. Forgive me, Miss Darbisher. I scarcely dare—and yet you are so good—you shall tell me. Was I a fool—a madman to come down here, knowing so certainly what would happen?

STELLA. That what would happen?

WILD. That I should love you. (*Taking her hand*)

STELLA. Mr. Wilding!

WILD. What have I done? I was a madman to speak. I might have known that I should anger you. (*Going up* C.)

STELLA. I am not angry—only——(*Crosses* C. *to* R.)

WILD. Only——(*Coming to her on her* L.)

(*Enter* MARSHALL C. *from* L., *comes down*)

STELLA. What can I say?

WILD. Whatever your heart tells you to say.

STELLA. My heart tells me——

WILD. That you——

MARS. Mr. Wilding—(*at back* C.)

WILD. (*Aside*) Curse him!

MARS. Can I speak to you sir, for a moment?

WILD. (*Furious*) No!

MARS. A matter of business sir, but some other time will do.

STELLA. I am going.

WILD. Don't go, the man can wait.
STELLA. No, I want to be alone—to think.
WILD. But your answer?
STELLA. I will tell you later.
WILD. To-day?
STELLA. Yes, to-day.

(*Exit* STELLA R. 1 E.)

WILD. She will say yes; I think that would save me. Why not? She is her own mistress. We could marry at once, then even if they discovered me, they would not molest me. This Gardiner is apparently going to join the family himself, and for the sake of the family he must take my part, if anything unpleasant should arise. Could anything unpleasant arise? No —I think not. (L.) I think not.
MARS. Mr. Wilding—(*up stage* L.)
WILD. Oh, you're still there. What the devil do you want?
MARS. (*Aside*) He don't talk like that when any of the family's around. I want to speak to you on a subject of importance to me, sir.
WILD. How can it interest me?
MARS. Well, sir, you knew the gentleman.
WILD. What gentleman?
MARS. My brother, sir.
WILD. Your brother! No, I did not know the—*gentleman.*
MARS. Excuse me, sir, he was a bit of a gentleman in his way, 'aughty and 'igh 'anded from a kid, and you knew, him sir, in Queensland, where he died, of thirst as I heard you say. Marshall sir, William Marshall.
WILD. (*Aside*) My God! (*By tree* L.)
MARS. Yes, sir—the man as you did the tramp with, my brother, poor Bill.

(WILDING *takes out pipe.*)

WILD. Your brother, eh? Your brother! Fetch me some matches.
MARS. (*Aside*) Fetch him some! Well, if he ain't the coolest 'and.
WILD. Look sharp.
MARS. Yes sir.

(*Exit* L.)

WILD. I'm not safe here. This place is a hornet's nest. The long arm of coincidence has reached after me. Ah, I neglected one thing—silence! Yet how could I suspect when I told the story about the tramp in the bush that the gaping ears of a prying servant were drinking it in, and that he should be this horrible Marshall. How could I have foreseen when I accepted Seabrook's invitation that I should meet a suspicious squatter, and that he should be this very Gardiner? What must I do? Abandon it all, and go back?

(*Sees and picks up* STELLA'S *book sits* R.)

No, I can't, I won't be an outcast again, I'll fight it out. The end is worth the struggle.

(*Enter* MARSHALL *with matches.*)

MARS. Matches, sir.
WILD. Thanks.

(WILDING *lights pipe.*)

Well, my man, I suppose you've nothing more to say. Your brother said nothing to me about his friends. He's dead, and there's an end of it.

MARS. (*Aside*) Is he! One moment, sir. (L. C.) You see, although Bill wasn't rightly my brother, only adopted by my people—my foster-brother—I was very fond of him.

WILD. (*Aside*) Liar.

MARS. He was sent away to school when we were boys and I ain't seen him since, but I've thought about him, sir, no end.

WILD. By the way, how do you know that this particular Marshall was your foster-brother?

MARS. I'd swear to it, sir, from what I heard you say. I'd tell you how I'd know him, to make quite sure. You see although I was fond of him, we used to row sometimes as boys, and one day he hit me with a rake, and I let him have it on the left arm with a pruning knife.

(WILDING *holds his left arm for a moment unconsciously.*)

Yes, sir, just about there. I'll swear he never lost that mark. Perhaps you noticed it on him, sir?

WILD. No, I never noticed it.

MARS. Yes, I loved Bill dearly, though he was treated

different to me at home, fed and pampered and educated as if he'd been a young lord. I got all the kicks like a dog. My people was well paid for it, I suppose, and I didn't hate him like poison as some boys might, because, after all, between ourselves, sir—(*leaning close to* WILDING) he was nothing but a common bastard.

WILD. (*Springing up and seizing* MARSHALL *by the throat, swinging him to* R.) You dog—I'll wring your cursed neck!

(MARSHALL *trying to push* WILDING'S *arm back, in so doing pushing his left coat sleeve up his arm*)

MARS. Mr. Wilding! sir—I didn't mean—I'm——

(*Suddenly gazes on* WILDING'S *left arm which is exposed to the elbow.*)

The mark! The mark!

(WILDING *starts violently.*)

It was just such a mark as that, I made on dear old Bill with the pruning knife.

WILD. Well, now you see that your Bill was not the only man who had been knifed by a cur—(*throws* MARSHALL *down* R.) now go. (*Goes up, turns*) And mark this. If you ever presume to address me in private again, I will thrash the life out of you. (*Goes up* C.)

MARS. (*Rises and follows* WILDING *up*) Look here now, there's no use your trying to frighten me. I mean business. You're the fellow that was brought up in our family—my foster-brother. That pretty story you told the ladies about William Marshall dying of thirst in Queensland was all humbug, for you yourself are William Marshall.

(WILDING, *about to strike him, checks himself; crosses down* L. C.)

Now to business—William Marshall wishes to be thought dead—I'm the only one as knows he is alive; very good, I'm for sale!

(*Enter* LADY S. *and* MRS. S. C.)

WILD. Sale! I should consider you dear at any price.

MARS. Oh, if that's the way, Mr. Bill.

(*About to strike him.*)

WILD. What? (*Hitting* MARSHALL *with whip*)
MRS. S. (*Comes down* C.) Marshall!

(MARSHALL *to* R., WILDING *to* L. C.)

MARS. I beg pardon, ma'am, but this—(*Aside*) Shall I split, or wait and make him pay?

WILD. (L. C.) I beg your pardon, Mrs. Seabrook, but the man who died with thirst in Queensland—you remember my little story—was this man's brother.

MARS. (R.) I'll wait. (*Aside aloud*) Not brother, ma'am, but we was brought up together, and I was very fond of him, loved him more than a brother. (*Looking at* WILDING)

MRS. S. That will do—you may go. (*Goes up* C. *a little*—LADY S. *down* L. C.)

MARS. (*Loking back*) The bastard's the gentleman, and the honest man's the servant. I'll change all that. that.

(*Exit* R. 1 E.)

LADY S. (*Coming down* L. C.) Quite a strange coincidence, Mr. Wilding.

WILD. Life is full of such coincidences, Lady Staunton! (*Crosses* R. *up stage, takes book from seat*)

MRS. S. (C.) What sort of a man was this Marshall? (*Comes down* C.)

WILD. (R.) Quite an ordinary person. A man of no account. (*Goes up*)

LADY S. (C. *aside, looking at* WILDING) Why, I wonder does he wish to be thought dead? (*Goes* L. C.)

MRS. S. (*To* LADY S. *on her* R.) Leave me with him, Betty.

LADY S. Why do you wish to be alone with him? (*Pause*, WILDING *is up* R. C.) Mary, you are trifling with a great danger.

MRS. S. What do you mean?

LADY S. That in allowing Mr. Wilding to remain, you will ruin the happiness of your son—Harry.

MRS. S. How?

LADY S. Are you so blind that you don't see how Stella is beginning to love this man?

MRS. S. Stella—nonsense! Nothing can come between Stella and my boy. (*Moves away* C.)

LADY S. Just imagine for a moment that I am right. Would you allow your husband to give his niece to this stranger without knowing the truth.

MRS. S. Of course not. The idea doesn't bear thinking of. I've suffered too much from my original deceit to crown it with such wickedness. But you are absurdly mistaken. Leave me with him, dear—you can trust me.

LADY S. I doubt if I can, you've too much of that inconvenient thing called heart. At least promise me to get rid of Marshall.

MRS. S. I will—at once.

LADY S. And you must get rid of him (*indicating* WILDING)

MRS. S. Yes, but if he were your son——

LADY S. My son! Heaven forbid!

(*Exit* LADY S. L. 1 E.)

MRS. S. Alone with him at last. How I love him. (C.) If I could only do something for him. Mr. Wilding! (*He turns from balustrade*) Do you know, you interest me deeply. (*Crosses to seat* R.)

WILD. (*Behind seat*) I am very happy to hear it, Mrs. Seabrook.

MRS. S. (*Sits* R.) You must remember the gratitude I owe you for saving my husband's life.

WILD. (*Sits* R.) That was a trifle, I only had to stretch out my hand.

(*Gong ready.*)

MRS. S. But beyond that I am always interested in people who have suffered—you won't think me inquisitive, but you have not known much happiness I fear.

WILD. You are right, the very word is strange to me.

MRS. S. (*Aside*) Ah!

WILD. I don't think a man can be really happy alone. All my people died before I was old enough to know them. I have been alone all my life.

MRS. S. (*Rises and crosses* L. *Aside*) My sin against him. Mr. Wilding, I wish you to believe that I am your friend. We return to Town in a day or two, and I suppose you will be going abroad again?

WILD. (*Rises*) Perhaps—it depends on circumstances. (*Looks* R. 1 E.)

MRS. S. In any case, if I can ever be of service to you, if ever you want the help of a friend, think of me—you promise, you will promise.

WILD. (*Takes her hand*) You are very good. I promise.

MRS. S. Not good. I have a boy of my own.

WILD. Ah, yes.
MRS. S. You must think of me as your mother.
WILD. I never knew my mother.
MRS. S. But she loved you.
WILD. I never even learnt the word mother.
MRS. S. Don't speak like that! You will learn it.
WILD. I am too old to learn. (*Goes up* C. *to* R.)

(*Enter* MR. SEABROOK L. 1 E.)

MRS. S. Don't say that! (C. *up*) Hush. She may hear you, it would pain her.
MR. S. Mary!
MRS. S. James!
MRS. S. Is that you, dear.

(*Gong.*)

MRS. S. (*Is much agitated, puts* MR. S. *on seat* R.) Yes, dear, I must see to the luncheon. I can't bear it. (*Crosses* L.) Mr. Wilding, you will remember?
WILD. I will remember.
MRS. S. It's more than I can bear.

(*Exit* L. 1 E.)

MR. S. Wilding? My wife seems a little disturbed. Have you been telling her one of your charming but painful stories?
WILD. I must confess I have. (R. C.)
MR. S. (C.) Ah, that accounts for it, she has a very tender heart. I will go to her. I always feel uneasy when she is not near me. Will you lend me your arm? Gardiner and Mabel have unkindly deserted me, and I mistrust my eyes. (*Going*) Do you know, Wilding, I like you.
WILD. I am very glad to hear it.
MR. S. I do, indeed! Didn't you save my life,—I hope to see a great deal more of you.
WILD. That is my intention.

(*Exeunt both* L. 1 E.)

(*Enter* MABEL *and* GARDINER C. *from* L.)

GARD. Tell me why you think I suspect your friend—(MABEL *gives look*) I mean our friend.
MABEL. Because you are continually watching him, and laying conversational traps for him.

GARD. I'm very sorry, I won't do it again. (MABEL *sits* R.)

MABEL. That's not an answer. Have you remembered yet where you heard his voice before?

GARD. (*Sits*) His voice? Miss Seabrook, are you a witch?

MABEL. No, but I have sharp ears—when you were introduced to him you muttered, "I know that voice."

GARD. Well, I will acknowledge that his voice is familiar, but there, I would rather stop if you will let me.

MABEL. But suppose I won't let you.

GARD. I am afraid I should have to tell you.

MABEL. Do. (*Puts flower in* GARDINER'S *buttonhole*)

GARD. But wait—suppose I were to say I have particular reasons for not telling you at present.

MABEL. I'm afraid I should have to say—Have your own way.

GARD. That would be very sensible, and suppose I were to say, Mabel, I——

MABEL. I would have to tell Papa. (*Rises and crosses to* L.)

GARD. Let me tell him.

MABEL. He'll be very angry. You try him.

GARD. I mean to. (*About to kiss her*)

(*Enter* HARRY R. *goes up* C.)

MABEL. You mustn't! Here's Harry. (*To* HARRY) We haven't seen much of you this morning—have you taken to study?

HARRY. Where is Wilding?

MABEL. Don't know. With Stella, perhaps.

(*Exit* MABEL L. 1 E.)

HARRY. (R.) Gardiner!

GARD. (C.) What is it, old fellow?

HARRY. This Wilding—I'm going to insult him.

GARD. Nonsense! What for?

HARRY. Because I hate him.

GARD. My dear boy, I didn't think you were so young.

HARRY. I'm old enough to know an adventurer when I meet one.

GARD. Well, supposing he is an adventurer, it would scarcely be good form to insult him under the circumstances.

HARRY. Damn form! You seemed to have conceived quite an attachment for the fellow.

GARD. Perhaps I have in a way. He interests me.

HARRY. Although you know in your heart as well as I do that he's a scamp and not fit to be here—that if the governor weren't so simple—so easily taken in——

(*Enter* WILDING L. 1 E.)

GARD. Hush! Here is Wilding—now come away and don't be a fool. (*Both go up* C. HARRY *led by* GARDINER)

HARRY. (*Coming down to* R. *of* WILDING) Mr. Wilding, I want to convey to you as politely as you will let me that I don't like you.

WILD. Eh?

HARRY. I don't like you, sir.

WILD. Indeed! That is interesting—but not important.

HARRY. It should be sufficient if you have any gentlemanly instinct.

WILD. I'm afraid our ideas of gentlemanly instinct differ, if I'm to judge of yours by your present conduct.

HARRY. You may judge what you like, sir; my opinion remains that finding your presence here to be obnoxious you should withdraw.

WILD. When I learn that I am your guest, I shall certainly not remain.

GARD. (R. *to* HARRY) Why will you be a fool?

HARRY. Leave me alone. (*To* WILDING) That is a paltry quibble. You are the guest of my father, who being simple in the ways of the world——

WILD. In which you are apparently very learned, and experienced.

HARRY. Experienced enough to detect in you the common adventurer.

WILD. (*Menacingly*) What?

GARD. (*Taking* HARRY *down* R.) Come away, Harry—this is idiotic and discreditable.

HARRY. Don't interfere, Gardiner.

GARD. I must. You don't know the man. You're playing with fire.

(HARRY *breaks away and goes up stage*)

WILD. (*Having controlled his temper*) The passions of a jealous youth may be interesting to you, Gardiner, as a psychologist, but to me they are wearisome. Take him away to some cool place, and let him simmer down. (*Crosses to* R.)

HARRY. (*Coming down to* L. *of* WILDING) By Heaven, sir, if words won't move you, I'll try something more forcible. (*Raises hand to strike* WILDING.)

(*Enter* MRS. SEABROOK C. *from* L.)

GARD. You are mad.

(*Simultaneously*)

MRS. S. Harry! (*Pause*) What does this mean?
WILD. Merely a friendly discussion on——
HARRY. It's a lie.

(WILDING *gets behind seat*)

MRS. S. Harry, you will please remember that I am present. I will not have your father's guest—my guest insulted. Mr. Wilding, with the instinct of a gentleman, wished to conceal from me that you have been quarrelling.

HARRY. He is not a gentleman, and I have told him so.

MRS. S. Hush, dear, now go—and leave me to apologise to Mr. Wilding for your rudeness.

(WILDING *goes up* R. GARDINER *a little up* L. C.)

HARRY. If you prefer this stranger to your own son. (*Down* R. C. *a little*)

MRS. S. (*With great pain* C.) Harry, stop! you—you—shock me. Go! (HARRY *crosses* L.)

GARD. (R. *of* HARRY) I tell you candidly, my friend, you have made a fool of yourself.

HARRY. No matter, he'll have to go.

GARD. No doubt, but you want taming. Try twelve months' bullock driving.

(GARDINER *pushes* HARRY *off* L. 1 E. *and follows.*)

MRS. S. (L. C.) Mr. Wilding, I am excessively pained——

WILD. (C.) I beg that you will not speak of it. Your son has not been very polite to me, but I can forget it, although it has cost me dearly in cutting short my visit here.

MRS. S. Don't say that. Harry is young, only twenty—and excessively hot-headed. He seems to have some

fancied grievance against you, which I can't understand —you will not leave for such a trifle?

WILD. I must—at once—to-day.

MRS. S. To-day.

WILD. Yes. I can't permit myself to be a cause of discord here. I have been very happy in your house, Mrs. Seabrook. It is over now. But I must always think of you with the deepest gratitude. Good-bye! (*Goes up* C.)

MRS. S. Good-bye. No.—no—(aside) I cannot let him go. Stay at least until to-morrow.

(*Enter* STELLA R. 1 E.)

STELLA. Haven't you heard the luncheon gong? (R. C.)

WILD. Miss Darbisher shall decide. (C.)

MRS. S. Mr. Wilding talks of going to-day. (L. C.)

STELLA. To-day?

WILD. Mrs. Seabrook, I have dared to love your niece.

MRS. S. You love Stella?

WILD. Let her decide.

(WILDING *turns to* STELLA.)

MRS. S. Ah! (*Crosses* L.) This is impossible! (*Aside*) It would mean discovery. (*To* WILDING) It would ruin Harry's happiness.

WILD. Harry's!

MRS. S. Yes, he loves her.

WILD. And I? Miss Darbisher, shall I go or shall I stay?

STELLA. Don't go.

WILD. Stella, my darling.

MRS. S. Oh! Brother against brother!

(*Moans—leans against tree in fainting condition*)

STELLA WILDING

MRS. S.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

AFTER DINNER—SAME DAY AS ACT II.

SCENE—*Smoking room or Conservatory at Fernshawe; that is, a conservatory with a little fountain playing and dressed with exotics, filled up with lounges and chairs. A short staircase between* L. U. E., *and Curtains at the top.*

(HARRY *discovered smoking, up stage* R. C.)

HARRY. It's all over then. There's evidently an understanding between them. That's why the Mater is so put out and the Gov's so quiet to-night. The hawk has secured the pigeon. He *is* a hawk, I'll swear—he has it in his face—his voice—in his manner. He only wants her money. (*Sits* L. *of* R. *table*) What idiots women are and what idiots men must be to love them. . . . . I can't help it—I love her still—I *must* love her although she's jilted me for a cad she's only known for a week. She liked me well enough till he came, if she didn't actually love me. (*Rises*) By Heaven! he shan't have her if I have to kill him. . . . . I'll swear Gardiner knows something about him—Why doesn't he speak? (*Sits* R. *of* R. *table.*)

(*Enter* MARSHALL *with coffee* L. U. E.)

MARSH. Coffee, sir. (*Puts it down*)

HARRY. Thanks.

MARSH. (*Going*) He'd like to know what I do. It'd be worth a few pounds to him. Wilding refuses to pay. Perhaps he will. (*Pause*) I'm leaving to-morrow, sir.

(*Comes back* C.)

HARRY. Oh, that's all right.

MARSH. I've been a long time in your mother's family, sir, and my people served you before I was born; but now I've been turned away with a fortnight's pay.

HARRY. Have you? Well, for very good reasons, no doubt. That will do.

MARSH. Very good reasons for Mr. Wilding, sir.

HARRY. Wilding! What do you mean?

MARSH. (R. C.) I'd swear it's him as has had me turned away.

HARRY. Nonsense. What has Mr. Wilding to do with you?

MARSH. That's for him and me to say.

HARRY. Well, say it. Did you ever meet him before?

MARSH. (*Contemptuously*) Did I ever meet him before——

HARRY. Don't repeat my words, please. If you have anything to say, say it and go.

MARSH. Well, yes, sir, I will—but you see I'm dismissed, and likely enough I'll be out of a situation for some months.

HARRY. Yes; I should say that's likely enough. (*Contemptuously*)

MARSH. And times is pretty hard, sir.

HARRY. I see. You want to be paid. (*Rises and crosses* L.)

MARSH. Don't we all, sir?

HARRY. (*Sits* L. *on seat*) Yes, my experience is that you all do.

MARSH. Besides, I have a great affection for Mr. Wilding—love him dearly, sir—and I don't think it would be fair to sell him, not under a considerable sum.

HARRY. Of course not.

MARSH. You could crush him, sir, if you knew what I do.

HARRY. (*Aside*) No. (*Aloud*) That will do.

MARSH. And you'll pay, sir.

HARRY. (*Angrily*) Get out, before I kick you out. (*Crosses* R. C.)

MARSH. (*Aside*) Middle class cub.

(*Exit* L. 2 E.)

HARRY. No, that sort of thing is too dirty. I'll trust to Gardiner. He swears it will be all right—and that he is the real master of the situation. Well, he ought to exert himself, as he is evidently going to marry Mabel, and wouldn't exactly care for this scamp as a cousin-in-law. (*Goes up* C.) Would Stella hate or love me if Wilding were exposed—God knows!

(*Going off* R. *up*)

(*Enter* STELLA L. U. E.)

STELLA. Harry, are you here?

(*He is behind an exotic and doesn't reply, but smokes violently.*)

Ah, there is no smoke without fire. (*Discovers him*) I thought so. Why don't you come to the drawing room? (*Down* L.)

HARRY. Because I'd rather not. (R.)

STELLA. (C.) Come, you've been here long enough. Is it because you are angry with me? I've come to say I'm sorry.

HARRY. For what?

STELLA. For speaking unkindly this morning. Won't you forgive me?

HARRY. Yes, I forgive you *that.*

STELLA. You imply that there is something else which you won't forgive. Well, I must be content to take your forgiveness in installments. Don't let's talk any more now for fear we shall quarrel again. Come to the drawing-room!

HARRY. Stella!

STELLA. Harry, you distress me!

HARRY. You ask me to come to the drawing room to see that man making love to you when you know that you are breaking my heart.

STELLA. I don't know it. I never knew—— (*Sits* L.)

HARRY. You never knew! Not when we were children?

STELLA. No.

HARRY. (*Back of settee* L.) Not when we grew older and were almost inseparable, and when at school wrote to each other every week?

STELLA. Ah, but that's different.

HARRY. And didn't you even guess down here the year before last from what I said to you in the orchard?

STELLA. I never thought that you were serious.

HARRY. (*Sits* R. *of* STELLA) I was too serious. And you were, too—tell me, did you never feel any love for me?

STELLA. I don't know—I don't think so, or I couldn't have cared for anyone else. I have always thought you my very dearest friend. If I married you I should lose a dear friend—I almost feel as if I had lost one now.

HARRY. If you had not met this—Mr. Wilding, do you think you would have loved me?

STELLA. (*Crosses to* R. C.) How can I say?

HARRY. (*Slight pause*) would you still love him if you learned that he is utterly unworthy of you?

STELLA. That is impossible!

HARRY. Try and suppose it.

STELLA. I'd rather not. I'd rather not speak of it. I must go to the drawing room—(*going up* C.) if you will not come. (*Going to* L. *up* C. R.)

HARRY. (C.) I will tell you. You would not love him. You don't really love him now, but he has fascinated you with his romance, his melancholy, his adventures——

STELLA. Harry, we have surely been friends too long to become enemies now. (*Gets* R.)

HARRY. (*Follows* STELLA) Enemies! No—I will always love you, Stella.

STELLA. (R.) But you insult someone I care for.

HARRY. (C.) Yes. I can't help hating him—but I needn't have insulted him. I am sorry.

STELLA. But you have not told him so.

HARRY. What! You would have me——

STELLA. Wouldn't it be manly?

HARRY. It is impossible. (*Crosses* R.)

(*Enter* WILDING C. *from* L.)

WILD. I beg your pardon.

STELLA. (R. C.) Mr. Wilding, you and Harry must both feel that you have something to regret.

WILD. (L. C.) I assure you that no one can regret more than I——

HARRY. (R.) Excuse me. The blame rests entirely with me. I insulted Mr. Wilding this morning for the absurd reason that I am unable to feel any friendship for him.

WILD. That is my chief cause for regret——

HARRY. Being in the wrong I—I wish to say—(*looking at* STELLA) that—I am sorry.

(*Exit* R. *1st.*)

STELLA (C.) You see, he is a good fellow after all; you mustn't dislike him.

WILD. (L.) I don't dislike him, I admire him. I was unable to rest in the drawing room without you.

STELLA. Why?

WILD. I seem afraid of losing you.

STELLA. Oh—you will not lose me.

WILD. I wish I could feel sure of that. But such happiness seems too good for me—and—and——

STELLA. Yes?

WILD. Barriers seem already to be rising between us.

STELLA. What do you mean? I'm sure my guardian likes you—besides, he would deny me nothing.

WILD. I was not thinking of your guardian.

STELLA. You mean?——

WILD. Yes, I mean Mrs. Seabrook.

STELLA. It is strange, but I, too, have fancied that she is just a little opposed to our engagement. What can be the reason?

WILD. (*Half to himself*) I cannot guess. I wish I could, otherwise she is so good to me. And yet I can't help feeling—(*Crosses* R.) that if you and I should be parted it will be through her. (*Sits* R. *on settee*)

STELLA. (*Standing*) Please don't be so gloomy. I am sure we will not be parted; perhaps Auntie—with a proper sense of English propriety—thinks we have not known each other long enough yet.

WILD. Perhaps she feels that I am not worthy of you.

STELLA. Impossible to feel that.

WILD. Then you trust me?

STELLA. If I did not trust you so entirely I could not love you.

WILD. (*Absently*) Yes.

STELLA. Now you needn't be gloomy any more.

(*Gets around to* R. *of him, sitting on his* R. *at end of couch*)

WILD. Not if you assure me that nothing can part us.

STELLA. Nothing shall part us.

WILD. And if your aunt persists in her opposition?

STELLA. But she can't.

WILD. Why?

STELLA. Well, doesn't it stand to reason that the more she knows of you, the more she will like you.

(*Music.* WILDING *rises.*)

WILD. (*Pause—looks at her*) Er—yes. (*Smiles*)

STELLA. But you are convinced?

(*He kneels on ottoman*)

WILD. I shall only be *quite* happy when we are married. If you will let me press for an early day.

STELLA. Not *too* soon. (*Is seated*)

(WILDING *takes her two hands*)

WILD. I mean very soon.

(STELLA *rises*)

Would that be making too great a claim on your confidence?

STELLA. Promise me in return that we shall travel for a year.

(*They walk together to* C.)

Oh, I long to have some adventures—to see all the queer things you have seen—kangaroos—wambats—opossums—and the lions and the tigers——

WILD. Well, er——

STELLA. Not lions?

WILD. I'm afraid I can't promise you lions.

STELLA. And those strange men the miners almost turned to savages—and, yes—I think I would even like to meet a bushranger.

(WILD. *starts.*)

But only, if you were with me, of course.

WILD. Of course,—Yes, I promise.

STELLA. Yes—we will go to the scene of your adventures—we will go to Queensland.

WILD. No, we will not go to Queensland, not to Queensland.

(*Exeunt* C. *to* L.)

(MUSIC *stops. Enter* GARDINER *and* MR. SEABROOK 2 E. D. GARDINER *puts* SEABROOK *on settee* L.)

MR. S. I regret very much to say, Gardiner, that I'm becoming suspicious.

GARD. Suspicious, sir! of whom?

(*Brings chair to* R. *of* MR. SEABROOK.)

MR. S. Of mankind and the world in general. The thought of becoming suspicious in my old age gives me great uneasiness.

GARD. What can be the cause of the attack?

MR. S. Heaven knows.

GARD. When did it come on?

MR. S. To-day, after lunch, when our friend Wilding, pounced upon me with an offer for my niece's hand.

GARD. (*Aside*) This must be stopped. (*Aloud*) Have you given any reply to Wilding yet?

MR. S. No; I have promised to do so to-morrow.

GARD. (*Aside*) To-morrow!

MR. S. I have no idea what I am to say. But I must confess, Gardiner, he is a good fellow—and a gentleman—I like him.

GARD. So do I—to a certain extent.

MR. S. Now you know when my suspicions began. I'll confess still further—you'll think me ridiculous—but they extend even to you.

GARD. To me?

(GARDINER *rises and puts back chair, coming down to* R. C.)

MR. S. Forgive me, but it's true. By the way you carefully conducted me here from the drawing room—not in a casual way, it seemed to me, but with a certain amount of method and deliberation. (*Goes* L. C.)

GARD. I'm caught!

MR. S. I noticed, too, that before leading me away, you held an animated conversation with Mabel in a corner. You see I'm getting on; becoming quite an accomplished spy. Isn't it dreadful, eh? (*looks closely at* GARDINER, *with his glasses on*) Now, I notice that you've changed colour. Yesterday you might have remained the colour of a boiled lobster for hours without my noticing it. And now—it's very distressing—a healthy flow of blood to the face—and I suspect you.

GARD. You have my sympathy.

MR. S. Of course my suspicions are groundless?

GARD. What direction do they take?

(*Enter* MABEL U. E. L.)

MR. S. 'Pon my word, I can't say—that is—er——

GARD. Do you suspect me of a desire to rob you?

MR. S. Well, I can't say that——

MABEL. (*At back* C. *Aside*) I wonder has he said it yet.

MR. S. Still, I hope you'll remember that honesty's the best policy. (*Going* L.)

MABEL. Oh, it can't be settled yet. I'm worth more discussion than that.

GARD. Stay, one moment. (*Sees* MABEL *and motions her not to come—aside to her*) Go away.

MABEL. I shan't.

MR. S. (*Seeing the action, but not suspecting the cause*) Eh?

MABEL. I *should* so like to hear. (*Retires behind exotic*)

GARD. I say that I will be honest with you. I did not propose to rob you—but, on the contrary to make you a present.

MR. S. A present—that's nice of you. (*Aside*) I suspect more and more.

GARD. You have a limited family—two. I wish to augment that number.

MR. S. Oh!

GARD. By presenting you with another son.

MR. S. (*Groans, and sits* L.)

GARD. A poor enough creature—but mine own—in fact, myself.

MR. S. Ah!

MABEL. Now I'm sure he's come to the point.

MR. S. Gardiner, Gardiner, my worst suspicions are confirmed.

GARDINER. Your *worst* suspicions!

MR. S. Yes! You disguise it with alluring sophistry—but you—you meditate a robbery—my little treasure—my Mabel. I suspected your design—I expected this loss—but—(*overcome*) it seems to me that what we expect is the very thing—for which we are always least prepared. (*Rises.*)

MABEL. I can't bear this—I wish I hadn't come.

GARD. Mr. Seabrook—(*Gets a little to* C. R.)

MR. S. There, there—of course, I don't blame you—but——

(MABEL *running forward and throwing her arms round* MR. S.)

MABEL. Papa—what is this? I'm sure Mr. Gardiner has been saying some horrid things to you.

MR. S. Yes, and I daresay he's been saying the same horrid things to you, dear.

MABEL. Come away—you shan't listen any more. I thought George—I mean Mr. Gardiner—had more good feeling.

GARD. Oh!

MR. S. (*Going*) Oh, he's a hardened ruffian, dear. You rescued me in the nick of time.

(MABEL *looks back at* GARDINER *and kisses her hand as she exits with* MR. S.)

(GARDINER *sinking into settee* L.)

GARD. What a lucky devil I am. I've accomplished in five days what I came back to England for. This Wilding business is the only trouble left. I'm afraid I've not acted properly. I ought to have warned him off at once—but, hang it, I never suspected that he would play such a bold game—that Stella would fall in love with him, and that he would propose to marry her. I've let myself into a hole—and I don't see well how to get out of it. Suppose I say to him, Wilding, my friend, the game's up—you must go, I know you. He denies it and asks for proofs. Hang it, I can't say I know you by your voice—by your demeanour under certain references I have cunningly made, and by my inner convictions. He would laugh—he might even be rude enough to say "damn your inner convictions!" Yet he must be got rid of—and quietly, for the sake of the family—*our* family——

(*Enter* MARSHALL L. 1 E.)

Bring me some brandy and soda.

MARSH. Yes, sir. There is a gentleman called to see you—from London, sir—Mrs. Seabrook told me to bring him in here.

GARD. Bring him in then. (*Aside*) Who the deuce can this be?

(MARSHALL *brings in* RYAN)

MARSH. Mr. Ryan!

GARD. Ryan! Ryan! I don't know him. You wish to see me?

RYAN. (C.) Yes, sir. Came down from London on purpose.

GARD. Take a seat, Mr. Ryan.

(GARDINER *sits* R. C.)

RYAN. After you. Thank you. (*Looks at watch*) There's an up-train at 10:30 which I must catch. My time's precious.

GARD. Good! Mine is not without value. What can I do for you?

RYAN. (*Taking out pocket book*) You are Mr. Gardiner, owner of Marylands Station, Queensland?

GARD. True—and you have lately been in the tropics,

you have lived in the colonies, are of business-like habits and accustomed to interviewing strangers.

RYAN. You are evidently a close observer, sir. I'm glad of it, for perhaps you may have observed what sort of a man Captain Swift was when he stuck you up on Dingo Flat?

GARD. Captain Swift!

RYAN. Yes, the bushranger.

GARD. Then you are——

RYAN (*Gives card*) Exactly—Michael Ryan—of Queensland, Detective.

(*Goes up, takes chair and brings it down* L. C., *sits.*)

GARD. (*Aside*) Great heavens! Here's a pretty mess —give him up and what a scandal for the family! Honoured guest, engaged to the niece. And for him penal servitude for life, perhaps.

RYAN. (*Note-book in hand—aside*) What's all this? Looks as if he knows something. I'm waiting for your description.

GARD. I'm trying to remember something remarkable about the man. The only thing I can think of was—— (R. *of* RYAN.)

RYAN. (*Eagerly*) Yes.

GARD. He wore a mask. (*Sits* R. C.)

RYAN. Oh! That's not valuable. He probably doesn't wear it over here.

GARD. Here?

RYAN. Yes. I must tell you I am acting in the interests of the Queensland National Bank. Swift, as you of course know, broke into one of their country branches and frightening the manager out of his wits got away with a large sum.

GARD. Well?

RYAN. Swift, after that, entirely disappeared—nobody heard anything of him. Nobody knew who he really was—People supposed him dead.

GARD. Very likely he is.

RYAN. But some of the money he took has turned up.

GARD. Ah!

RYAN. In London.

GARD. That doesn't prove he is here.

RYAN. No, but it's a clue, and I've come over to follow it. Looking over the Passenger List in the Orient Co.'s office, I saw your name, and remembering the Dingo

Flat affair, I've taken the liberty of hunting you up. (*Rises*)

GARD. Well, I'm sorry you've wasted your time. I can't help you in the least.

RYAN. You can remember nothing about the man that would be useful to me. (*Puts chair back and comes down* L. C.)

GARD. Absolutely nothing. It was a dark night, and, as I told you, he wore a mask. (*Down* R.)

(*Enter* MARSHALL *with cellarette* L. U. E.)

RYAN. Confound him, he always did in business hours. I'm very sorry you can't help me. I would willingly pay £500 to anyone who could help me to capture the fellow—But I have so little description of him to go upon—only one or two things the Bank manager noticed when he was being tied up. (*Reads from note-book*) Captain Swift—tall—thin—a scar across the left arm——

MARSH. Oh—(*At table makes noise with coffee cup*)

RYAN. Well—what's the matter?

MARSH. Nothing—only a slight swimming in the head.

RYAN. Subject to that sort of thing?

MARSH. Yes, sir. I have been, very.

GARD. (*To* MARSHALL) You may go. Stay—you have finished with me, Mr. Ryan?

RYAN. Yes. And sorry to have troubled you for nothing.

GARD. (*To* MARSHALL) You may show the gentleman out. (*To* RYAN) Good evening.

RYAN. (*Going*) Good evening!

GARD. I hope you will let us know how you proceed.

RYAN. I will make a point of it.

GARD. I must see Wilding and warn him.

(GARDINER *goes up*, RYAN *to* L. C., MARSHALL *drops down on his* L.)

MARSH. (*Going with* RYAN—*aside*) Give me your address in town?

RYAN. What for?

MARSH. I want to speak to you about—a friend of mine in Queensland.

RYAN. There. (*Hands card, crosses in front of* MARSHALL)

(*Enter* WILDING L. 1 E.—*he and* RYAN *pause and look at each other.* WILDING *passes on to* R. C.)

RYAN. (*To* MARSHALL) Who's that?

MARSH. A great man, that; I'll tell you when I see you in town.

(*Exeunt both* L. 1 E)

(GARDINER *comes down.*)

WILD. Well, Gardiner—you haven't congratulated me.

GARD. No; the fact is, my mind has been occupied with other things.

WILD. Yes.

GARD. Particularly with Captain Swift.

WILD. The time has come, Gardiner, when I must ask you for an explanation on that subject.

GARD. An explanation?

WILD. Yes. You never hold a minute's conversation with me without referring to Captain Swift. It can't be accident—it must be design. I want to know your object.

GARD. Really, my dear Wilding——

WILD. Is it that you think I know something of the man, or had some connection with him? Is your object to insult me, to annoy me, or to bore me? (*Sits* R. *of* R. *table.*)

GARD. Neither, I assure you. (*Sits* L. *of* R. *table*)

WILD. Then let us drop the subject for good.

GARD. I wish I could—but I can't. Swift's on my mind, and I can't get him off.

(WILDING *drinks.*)

WILD. The man's dead!

GARD. You're mistaken.

WILD. I tell you he's dead. Let's drink to his memory.

GARD. But he's very much alive. He is no more dead than you are. Had you, yourself seen him die I should say you were mistaken. If you were to tell me that the man, Marshall, whom you saw die of thirst in Queensland, was none other than Captain Swift——

WILD. Gardiner!

GARD. Well? (*Pause*)

WILD. Ha! Ha! What a splendid imagination! You are wasted in the bush, my friend—(*drinks*) You

should remain in London and write novels. (*Rises* c.)

GARD. I was going to say that if you told me that—I should still say you were mistaken. I should say that if anyone died of thirst up Queensland it was not Marshall or Swift, not the man who—appropriated my black horse—not the man who once held a pistol to my head.

WILD. (*Aside*) What a damned fool he was not to shoot.

GARD. No; for Swift certainly escaped the country and came to England.

WILD. (*Aside*) To England (*Rises and crosses* c.) He can't frighten me now—(*Aloud*) Your theory is ingenious, but a little wild. Why should he come to England of all places?

GARD. Because being an uncommon man he would adopt an uncommon course. He might conceive the idea of hiding a desperate past in English society. He might even think of still further cloaking his early career by marrying into a good family.

WILD. (*Crossing to* GARD.) Splendid! An admirable plot—worthy of Dumas. And would our adventurer succeed in your charming story?

GARD. (*Rising*) No!

WILD. No?

GARD. No, he would fail in the end.

WILD. He would fail. There would be, I suppose, some highly virtuous but equally clever and intrepid person who would outwit and expose him?

GARD. No, quite unnecessary. Ordinary circumstances will do for Swift. The persistency of a robbed banking establishment, and the investigations of an industrious detective will suffice.

WILD. That is satisfactory to know.

GARD. (*Follows* WILD. L.) The adventurer generally brings about his own fate, Wilding. There is always one last grand chance—one big effort—one great wave of luck that will land him high and dry. So he swims into the wave and it bears him off towards the shore. He's full of hope and delight as he gets nearer and nearer, and he never sees the fatal rocks beneath the water until he's dashed against them, and down he goes, poor devil, for good.

WILD. What an entertaining companion you are, old fellow.

GARD. And that will be Swift's fate if he won't be warned. The detective who was here just now——

(WILDING *starts.*)

GARD. A fact, I assure you. The man who just left is a Queensland detective, come over after Swift.

WILD. (*Aside*) Liar!

GARD. And he will certainly get him if he remains in England. He came to see if I could give him any information.

WILD. And you gave him——?

GARD. I gave him no information. Indeed, if I could see Swift I would warn him.

WILD. (*Rises*) Why? (*Looking up*)

GARD. Why? Because I think he has good stuff in him, and because he resisted two thousand pounds' worth of temptation to shoot me. I wish he could know that I am the best friend he has.

(WILDING *pauses, then walks away to* L. C. *Bus.* GARDINER *shrugs his shoulders and crosses* R.)

(*Enter* MRS. SEABROOK C. *from* L.)

GARD. (*Aside*) He won't trust me.

MRS. S. Mr. Wilding, I must speak to you alone.

(GARDINER *exits.*)

MRS. S. (C.) There! We are alone. It was necessary.

WILD. (L. C.) How pale you are! Your hand trembles. Why?

MRS. S. You guess why I must speak to you?

WILD. I am delighted—but no—I cannot guess. Unless the necessity arise out of my engagement to Stella.

MRS. S. Your *proposal* to my niece. There can be no engagement.

WILD. No engagement?

MRS. S. No. Such a marriage is impossible. (*Crosses* R. C.)

WILD. Impossible, why? (*Takes a step to* R. C.) Is it Mr. Seabrook who objects?

MRS. S. No.

WILD. Who then?

MRS. S. It is I.

WILD. You?

MRS. S. Yes, I. (*Up* C. *again*) And I have come to you now to ask of your great generosity—I know—I am sure, you are capable of it. Never did a woman need it more than I. I ask you to believe me when I say that I would far rather die to-night than that this marriage should take place.

WILD. You have been very kind to me, but you ask in return more than I can give.

(*Music.*)

MRS. S. Don't say that—please don't say that! (*Imploringly to him*)

WILD. I must—if you asked me to risk my life for you I would willingly do it. But this—is more than my life to me—my first, my only chance of happiness. It is the first time in my lonely life that the clouds have opened and a ray of sunshine has come through—a promise of something different—something good. I love Stella—it is the first time I have loved. She loves me—it is the first time I have been loved.

(MRS. S. *turns to him.*)

I tell you I cannot give her up. (*Aside*) I dare not. (*Crosses* R.)

(*Music stops.*)

MRS. S. (*Aside*) Every word is a knife to me. . . Come, sit down, let us talk quietly, reasonably. (*Sinks on seat* L.)

WILD. (*Brings chair forward and sits* L. C.) Willingly. But you are agitated.

MRS. S. It is nothing. There, you see—I am perfectly calm. Your life has not been happy. My poor boy! Well, we may try and repair that!

WILD. Strange! Very strange!

MRS. S. I suppose the life of a child—brought up among strangers can't be very happy. Were they kind to you?

WILD. Why do you talk like this to me?

MRS. S. Because you are unhappy. Tell me—of your mother? You have thought of her sometimes and—perhaps not unkindly? (*Touching his hand*)

WILD. This is cruel! You must know, Mrs. Seabrook, that the subject is most painful to me. I cannot speak of her. (*Rises, crosses* C., *going up* C.)

MRS. S. Stay! (*Rises.* I don't wish to be cruel to you—but all this concerns your proposal to my niece.

WILD. How? (*Comes back a step.*)

MRS. S. Let me have time—I will tell you.

(*She is much agitated and looks round to see that they are alone.*)

I knew your mother.

WILD. You knew my mother? (*Down* R. C.)

MRS. S. Yes. I will tell you her story.

(*Music.*)

WILD. She knew my mother.

(MRS. S. *goes up stage, looks round and back to* C.)

MRS. S. She was only a girl—and—and well—she would have been your father's wife, but he died—too soon.

WILD. He died too soon. I understand——

MRS. S. She would have been disgraced—ruined—but for a friend—a sister—who took her away—so that no one should know——

WILD. (*His back turned to her*) So that no one should know. Go on!

MRS. S. Then when the child was born it was given to strangers to bring us—she herself did not know to whom, and it was provided for secretly.

WILD. I know what became of the child. And the mother? (*Turns his face to her*)

MRS. S. You must forgive her.

WILD. She lives?

MRS. S. Yes. And married a good man who loved her, and who never knew the truth. If he learned it now it would kill him.

(*Takes stage, a little to* L.)

WILD. Where is she? (*Follows her*)

MRS. S. You will forgive her? (*Turns to him*)

WILD. Where is she?

(*Warning for Curtain.*)

MRS. S. If you marry Stella the truth must appear.

WILD. Tell me where she is.

(MRS. S.—*pause—dumb business—finish kneeling—*
(*Music stops.*)

WILD. My mother!

MRS. S. (*On her knees*) Ah, you hate me—you despise me—you cannot forgive me. This is my punishment—I deserve it. I launched you into the world a

waif—I denied you a mother's care. I disowned you—I put myself first in everything and now, when I claim you at last it is to ask a sacrifice from you. I am selfish to the end. Don't spare me.

WILD. (*Aside*) Too late!

MRS. S. You have reason to hate your mother! Now is your time for vengeance.

WILD. (*Lifts her up*) How could I hate you? You have been kind to me .

MRS. S. If you marry Stella my husband must learn the truth.

WILD. I have told you I love her—I have no right to love.

MRS. S. My son—speak kindly to me—one word, only one word.

WILD. You did not teach me how. (*Crosses to* L.)

MRS. S. Heaven help me! (*Goes up* C.) It is just—it is just!

(*Exit* MRS. S. *slowly* C. R.)

WILD. (*About to follow her*) Mother—my mother—my mother! I am alone again—alone again. Well, what am I to do now? Remain here and marry Stella, why not? This discovery makes my position all the more secure. What do I owe to my mother!—She—she—the air of this place is stifling me.

(*Song.*)

I cannot think. Better act without thinking. Better for whom? (*Rings bell*) Better for Stella. I began by trying to make her love me—I have ended by loving her—Strange! (*Goes to writing table and writes.*)

(*Enter* BATES U. E. L.)

BATES. Did you ring, sir?

WILD. I am obliged to go up to town to-night; is there a train I can catch?

BATES. The 10:30's passed, sir—but there's one at 11:12.

WILD. Then tell my servant to pack my portmanteau at once. And follow me to town by the first train in the morning. Don't mention it to anyone. I don't wish to disturb the family. You understand? And just bring my hat and coat!

(*Exit* BATES U. E. L.)

WILD. (*Having silently read what he has written—with the letter in his hands with action conveying that he is uncertain whether to destroy it or not*) Have I done right? No—let it go.

(*Re-enter* BATES *with hat and coat. He helps* WILDING *on with coat*)

WILD. (*To* BATES) Take this letter to—I want you to give this letter to Mr. Seabrook when I have gone.

(*Enter* GARDINER C. *from* L.)

GARD. (*Coming down* C.) Are you going, Wilding?
WILD. Yes. I'm called to town on important business——(*Signs* BATES *off*)

(*Exit* BATES L. U. E.)

(*Handing letter to* GARDINER) Perhaps you wouldn't mind giving this letter to Mr. Seabrook.
GARD. Not at all. (*Takes letter—crosses* R.) I'm sorry you're obliged to go, old fellow, but—by the way, let me give you my London address? (*Takes out card case*) Here is my card if I can be of any service to you at any time. (*Offers card under lamp*) One never knows—you understand?
WILD. (*After slight hesitation*) I understand—I've had a good time here, Gardiner—good-bye!

(*Exit* C. *to* L.)

(*Song ceases.*)

GARD. (*Looking after him*) Poor devil! I wonder what lie he's told now. (*Tapping the letter*)

(*Enter* SEABROOK *crosses up* R.)

MR. S. Wilding! Wilding! Oh, it's you, Gardiner! That fellow Wilding, it seems has been talking to my wife for some time. They've had quite a scene, and now she is in a highly nervous state. She refuses to tell me what it's all about.

(*Enter* STELLA C. *from* L., *down* L.)

Where is Wilding, Stella, do you know?

STELLA. No.
GARD. Mr. Wilding has gone?
MR. S.)
&) Gone!
STELLA.)
GARD. Yes.

(*Enter* MRS. S. C. *from* L.)

MRS. S. What has happened?
STELLA. Mr. Wilding has gone?
MRS. S. Gone!
GARD. (*To* MR. S.) He asked me to give you this letter! (*Hands letter to* MR. S.)
MR. S. This may explain what has happened.
MRS. S. That letter—(*To* SEABROOK *who has opened the letter*) James, let me read it for you?
MR. S. No, thank you, I can see quite well.
(*Music.* MRS. S. *stands as if frozen to stone.*)
(*Reads*) Dear Mr. Seabrook—you will naturally expect some explanation of my sudden departure from your house in which I have received so much kindness. I had the audacity to propose for your niece's hand—but Mrs. Seabrook has told me——
MRS. S. (*Goes up* C., *agitated*) Oh, my God—he has told him! James!
MR. S. (*Reads*) But Mrs. Seabrook has told me—that which I should have known before I made the proposal—that—that—I am unworthy to marry your niece.
MRS. S. Thank heaven! (*With a sigh of relief*)

(*Movement.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE—GARDINER'S *chambers.*

(GARDINER *and* HARRY *discovered.*)

GARD. (R. *of table* L.) You're not a very cheerful visitor this evening, old fellow. What's wrong with you?
HARRY. (L. *of table* L.) Oh, I'm all right. Only it was a little dull at Fernshawe Park after you left. I had a week of "the blues" and as we only returned to

town this morning perhaps I've not quite recovered yet.

GAR. A lame excuse, my boy. The fact is there's something on your mind.

HARRY. Nonsense.

GAR. Come, now, why don't you be frank with me. You know I'm to be your brother before long.

HARRY. Yes. I know the governor's consented and all that sore of thing. Oh, by the by, I've a note for you somewhere from Mabel. (*Searching his pockets*)

GAR. (*Starting up*) Oh, you have! Then why the devil didn't you give it to me before?

HARRY (*Still searching pockets*) Didn't think of it.

GAR. If you've lost it you won't leave this room alive.

HARRY. I wouldn't mind that much. Here it is. (*Goes up* L., *crosses to window* R.)

(GAR. *takes letter and comes down.*)

(*Aside*) Happy devil!

GAR. (*Opening letter, aside*) The little English flower I'm going to transplant to the bush. (*Reads*) "My dear George"—(*Looks up*) My dear George—I've often been addressed "My dear George"—yet I've never valued the circumstance before. "I am so glad to get back to London. I've been wanting to return ever since you left Fernshawe. I hope you will call in the morning." I will. "Papa is very serious—but I think he's getting reconciled since he gave his consent. As for naming the day as you suggest, it's quite impossible. I couldn't think of leaving dear Papa and Mamma, and however much you press for an early day I couldn't have my frocks ready before the end of this month. Your very affectionate Mabel. P. S. Papa kissed me just now and said you were a cruel man. N. B. I thing Papa likes you." Dear old Papa! Harry, old fellow, I'll be your brother sooner than I hoped to be.

HARRY. (*Indifferently*) That's all right. (*crosses* L.)

GAR. You don't seem to welcome the prospect very heartily.

HARRY. Yes, indeed I do—only——

GAR. Oh! I see! You can't be enthusiastic because your own love affairs haven't gone quite smoothly.

HARRY. I suppose you are right as usual. I'm a selfish beggar you see.

GAR. All men in love are serfish. Come, now, tell me the trouble.

HARRY. That man—Wilding is on my mind still.

GAR. (*Aside*) And on mine too.

HARRY. You see Stella was quite fascinated by him. He's a dangerous fellow. Why, even my mother—who never cares for anyone—out of her own family—seemed to like him and was upset when he left. I'd give a good deal to know that he was safe out of the way.

GAR. (*Aside*) So would I.

HARRY. I'm so afraid Stella wil not be able to forget him.

GAR. And you want her to forget?

HARRY. Well, of course I do—because—I want her to be happy again.

GAR. No other reason, old fellow?

HARRY. Yes—I don't mind your knowing, and I'm not ashamed of it—because I love her more than ever. There! I'm making a fool of myself. (*Goes* L. C.)

GAR. I like such fools! And you're not without hope?

HARRY. I don't encourage hope. I try not to think of it. But I'm strong enough to wait.

GAR. Good. I like that. In the end you'll succeed.

HARRY. You think so?

GAR. I'm sure of it, only wait and hope.

HARRY. But this Wilding——

GAR. I don't think he'll trouble you again.

HARRY. But tell me about him. Who is he?

GAR. I'd rather not talk about him.

HARRY. Because in your heart you like him.

GAR. Well there may be some truth in that. At least I pity him. Let's talk of something else. (*Goes* R.)

HARRY. (C.) All right, if you wish it. (*Crosses to mantelpiece* L.) But I'd like to know.

(*Enter* SERV. L.)

SERV. Mr. Ryan——(GARDINER *crosses and sit* R.)

(*Enter* RYAN *and* MARSHALL L.)

(RYAN *puts hat on table up* R.)

(*Exit* SERVANT L.)

GAR. Ryan!

RYAN. You'll forgive the intrusion I hope, sir, but I must see you.

GAR. On what business?

RYAN. On the business of Wilding—alias "Captain Swift."

HARRY. Wilding—Captain Swift.

MAR. Yes, sir. The fine gentleman you entertained at your house, and on whose account I was discharged was Captain Swift; the bushranger—a common colonial criminal!

HARRY. Good God! And do my people know this?

RYAN. Your father knows, for we've just seen him at your house where we went to make enquiries. (*Up stage to window* R.)

(GARD. *to* C.)

MAR. Miss Darbisher was with him and heard the good news at the same time.

HARRY. Gardiner (*Crosses* C. *to* GAR.) I must go home. This will have upset them all at home terribly. (*Going up* L. C.)

MAR. You see, sir, I was right. I haven't got it on my conscience that I didn't warn you.

HARRY. Kindly let me pass.

MAR. Certainly, sir. (*Steps back,* HARRY *crosses him*) But in the best families they don't invite common adventurers——

HARRY. (*At door* L.) If you ever dare address me again I'll beat you to a jelly.

(*Exit* L.)

MAR. (*Aside*) Cub!

GAR. (R. C. *Looking at his watch*) I can spare you just one minute and a half, Mr. Ryan.

RYAN. (L. *of* GARDINER) Thank you. I'll try and make that do. I have reason to believe that this man Wilding looks upon you as a friend.

GAR. I'm sure I don't know how he looks upon me.

MAR. (*Down* L.) You were always very friendly with him at Fernshawe.

GAR. Why is this man with you?

RYAN. He's given me important assistance.

MAR. I have a substantial interest in the capture of Wilding.

GAR. That is not a sufficient reason for your obnoxious presence here.

MAR. Excuse me, sir, but I'm here because I'm helping to hunt down the man I hate—and I mean to hunt him till I see him in irons.

GARD. (*Sitting*) Go!

RYAN. (*Crosses to* MARSHALL. *Aside*) Yes, go—and wait for me downstairs.

MAR. Excuse me (*Pushes* RYAN *aside, who goes up sage.* MARSHALL *crosses to* GARDINER) I'm not your servant and I decline to take your orders.

GAR. (*Rising*) Go!

MAR. (*Cowed, makes for the door—business—aside*) Certainly sir. Colonial upstart!

(*Exit* MAR. L.)

GAR. (*Sitting*) Now, Mr. Ryan.

RYAN. (L. *of* GARDINER) I've come to see if you can give me any information as to the whereabouts of this man.

GAR. How do you know that Wilding is Swift?

RYAN. From information received from the servant Marshall. Marshall came to town from Fernshawe by the same train, but Wilding slipped him. However, I have reasons for knowing that he's still in London, and I mean to have him. Has he been to see you? (*Pocket book in hand*)

GAR. He has not.

RYAN. Excuse me—has he written to you?

GAR. No.

RYAN. Have you written to him?

GAR. No.

RYAN. Do you know where he is?

GAR. No.

RYAN. Do you know anyone who is in communication with him?

GAR. No.

RYAN. (*Close pocket book and takes stage to* L.) Thank you sir—that will do.

GAR. Do you care for my opinion?

RYAN. (C.) Yes, certainly.

GAR. It is that Wilding has got far away from England by this time.

RYAN. I don't think he could.

GAR. He got away from Australia.

RYAN. True. Do you think he's likely to pay you a visit here?

GAR. 'Pon my word I've not thought about it at all.

RYAN. Did you invite him to do so before you left Fernshawe?

GAR. (*Crosses to* L.) Really, Mr. Ryan, I think you're presuming a little too much on my good nature.

RYAN. (R. *Aside*) Ah, he did. I must watch. (C.) If he comes to you will you kindly let me know?

GAR. I will. (RYAN *goes up* R., *takes hat and crosses* L. *to door. Aside*) A month or two later. Good evening.

RYAN. Good evening, sir, and thank you.

(*Exit* L.)

GAR. For nothing. I'm afraid that poor fellow's lost. Ryan wouldn't believe him to be in London without good reason. Why hasn't he got away? He's clever enough to have escaped a dozen Ryans if he exerted himself. A little of my money—which he's welcome to, poor devil, whenever he likes—and a little of his own cleverness and he might be safe away in no time. But I'm afraid he won't exert himself. When he left Fernshawe that night just a week ago he seemed utterly changed. All the old dare-devilry had vanished. I think he must have really loved Stella after all. (*Sits* R. *of table*) It's a wonderful thing—this love——

(*Takes up* MABEL'S *letter caressingly.*)

A wonderful thing. My dear George—(*Crosses* R.)

(*Enter* SEABROOK *and* STELLA, L., *shown in by* SER.)

MR. S. Gardiner!

GAR. Mr. Seabrook! (*Meet up* C.—MR. S. *crosses down* L.) How do you do, Miss Darbisher.

(*They shake hands.*)

How good of you to look me up in my den.

(GARDINER R., STELLA L. C., MR. SEABROOK *sits* L. *of* L. *table.*)

MR. S. Not good of us at all, I assure you. We've come in search of assistance.

STELLA. Oh, Mr. Gardiner, you will help me, won't you?

GAR. Try me.

STELLA. I want to save someone who—who—you understand—was once a friend.

GAR. (*Aside*) Whew! She knows.

STELLA. (*Advances to* GARD.) Someone whom I—I cared for—once until I knew that—until I knew——

GAR. I understand.

STELLA. That's all over now. But because I cared for him once I want to help him. He's in trouble—in danger perhaps—on account of his past life. I want him to escape the danger. Think how dreadful it would be for me—for us all who have known him and liked him to know that he is suffering a great punishment. He told me his life had been unhappy—I think he has not had the advantages we have had, and perhaps his temptations to sin have been greater.

GAR. I think they have. (*Knock ready*)

STELLA. It is said money can accomplish anything. I am rich. Let my money buy his liberty and open up a new and better life for him. Can you do this?

MR. S. Stella dear, let me talk this over for a few minutes with Gardiner!

STELLA. Yes. Try and arrange some plan for me. Can you do this? (*To* GARDINER) Shall I wait here? (*Pointing up*)

GAR. Certainly. (*Goes up with* STELLA) In this room.

STELLA. I rely upon you.

(*Exit* STELLA C.)

(GARDINER *comes down.*)

MR. S. (*Sits* L. C.) Gardiner, Gardiner this is an excessively painful business. At the same time my niece—who is apt to let her big heart run away with her—must not be permitted to compromise herself in her anxiety to do a good action. Pray convince Stella how utterly unworthy Wilding is.

GAR. (*Aside*) H'm—a pleasant task for me! I'll do my best.

MR. S. Thank you. One thing more. My wife is still ignorant of Wilding's identity with Captain Swift. I wish to guard her from the knowledge. For some time her nervous condition has given me considerable anxiety. Pray help me to conceal this exposure from her.

GAR. Certainly I will. But stay!

MR. S. Well?

GAR. The detectives have been here.

MR. S. Well?

GAR. Harry was here at the time and learned the truth. He left for home immediately.

MR. S. Good Heavens! If he sees his mother he will

tell her. He's so impetuous. I must return at once. Fortunately I've my brougham at the door. I'll come back for Stella. In the meantime persuade her to leave everything connected with poor Wilding entirely to us.

(*Exit* MR. S. U. E. L.)

GAR. (*Crosses to centre opening then comes down* C.) Here's a nice business. I'm to persuade that generous impulsive girl of the unworthiness of the man she still seems to love. Hang it, I don't feel old enough for the task. (*Takes stage to* R.) I'd rather meet Captain Swift again on Dingo Flat than face that warm-hearted girl in the next room. I might have some original remark for Swift but for her. However, I must do it. (*Goes up*) I suppose when a man is going to marry into a family he must accept his share of the family responsibilities.

(*Exit* C.)

(*Knock.*)

(*Enter* WILD.)

WILD. Gardiner! Not here. I'll wait. (*Looking through window. Pulls curtain quickly*) That was a narrow escape (*Then crosses to table* L.) Brandy! Gardiner won't mind my helping myself. (*Drinks*) He seems pretty comfortable here. He's a happy man—rich—no great sins on his heart—going to marry the girl he loves, altogether comfortable—and highly respectable. That's the essential thing to happiness—respectability. I tasted it once for a week—I lived in it—it breathed around me—I worshipped at its shrine. But I was never of it. I was mad to come over here. Better to endure hunger than smell the steam of the cook (R.) shop; better to have died in the bush than to have seen that girl—to have known that home—to have learnt that I have a mother. A little more brandy with the kind permission of respectability.

(*Enter* GAR. C.)

GAR. (*Aside*) I thought I heard——(*Comes down*) Wilding!

WILD. Gardiner! I'm a robber to the last, you see. But you forgave me the black horse, so perhaps you'll forgive me the brandy.

GAR. Nonsense. (*Offers his hand*)

WILD. You wish to shake hands with me?

GAR. We shook hands at Fernshawe.

WILD. God bless—I won't bless you—a bushranger's blessing would be too droll—but—but——(*Finishes brandy*)

GAR. I wanted to see you. You know that Ryan and Marshall are after you?

WILD. Yes, I do.

GAR. Hush.

WILD. Why?

GAR. (*Uneasily glancing up, aside*) She must not know he is here. They've been here.

WILD. I know. (*Goes to window* R.)

GAR. You know?

WILD. Yes, I've been on their track (*Comes down* C.) The only way to escape a detective is to follow him. Oh, I've had a wonderful week. Last night I came to the end of my resources. I hadn't the cheek to claim my balance at the bank—I had £30,000 there—I could not go back to my lodgings—I hadn't a penny in my pocket—no supper—nothing to drink—nothing to smoke.

(GARDINER *points to table* L., WILDING *goes—takes cigarette and smokes, then sits* L. C.)

GAR. (*Aside*) Poor devil!

WILD. I wandered about the streets until somehow I found myself opposite that house.

GAR. What house?

WILD. Her house—I mean Mr. Seabrook's house. There were a good many lights—so I knew that they had come back. And I stood there watching a long time until one by one the lights went out, and at last when all was dark I fancied I saw someone sitting at a window.

GAR. (*Looking up stage for a moment*) Only fancy.

WILD. Yes—only fancy perhaps. Yet it made me feel less lonely. However, I haven't come here to sponge on you and to talk sentiment, but to ask you to deliver two messages for me. Will you?

GAR. Certainly I will——

WILD. Listen. Tell Mrs. Seabrook that all the events connected with my visit to Fernshawe are sacred to me. Say just this—no one shall ever know. You understand?

(*Music.*)

GAR. Yes.

(*Enter* STELLA C., *sees* WILDING, *business.*)

WILD. And tell—that girl—Stella——

(*Pause.*)

GAR. Well?

WILD. you—who know my wretched past—tell her—what a damned scoundrel I am.

(*Knock ready.*)

GAR. I understand.

WILD. No, no, you don't understand. I don't want her to think—that I ever really cared for her——

(*He sees* STELLA. GARDINER *falls back* R.)

Stella!

(*Recovers himself—business.* STELLA *crosses to door* L., *pauses—returns and offers* WILDING *her hand. Business*)

(*Exit* STELLA L.)

(*Stop music.*)

(WILDING *stands looking after her.*)

GAR. Wilding!

WILD. (*Absorbed*) Eh!

GAR. You must rouse yourself! These men will certainly take you if you don't make an effort!

WILD. What do I care? I'm going to give myself up. (*Crosses* L.)

GAR. This is madness.

WILD. No, it's wisdom, believe me. I was born for reflection, not for action. My actions have always been bad—my reflections have often been good. When high walls restrain my actions my reflections will be exemplary.

GAR. And is this Captain Swift?

WILD. No. (*Crosses* R.) Swift is dead. Something killed him. What was it?—you—the home at Fernshawe, the touch of a woman's hand.

(*Knock.*)

GAR. Hush, someone is coming.

WILD. I fear no one now. Let them come. (*To window* R.)

(GARDINER *crosses. Enter* MRS. S. L.)

GAR. Mrs. Seabrook.

MRS. S. Yes, Mr. Gardiner. I have come to you to learn the truth. They hide it from me at home. They cheat me in kindness but you will tell me—what trouble is—Mr. Wilding in?

GAR. Mrs. Seabrook, it is impossible for me to——

(*She follows his eyes and sees* WILDING.)

MRS. S. Ah! he is here. (*Crosses to* C.) Let me speak with him alone.

(WILDING *comes down* R.)

GARD. Really Mrs. Seabrook! (C.)

MRS. S. You understand there is a secret—(L.)

GARD. I understand.

MRS. S. I know I can trust you.

(*Pause*—GARDINER *realizes.*)

GARD. You may—always. (*Aside*) Heaven help them.

(*Exit* L.)

(MRS. S. L. *and* WILDING, R., *look at each other*)

WILD. You should not have come. You endanger your secret—which no one must ever know.

MRS. S. I came here to learn the truth. Everything is kept from me. In pity tell me the truth.

WILD. You don't know then who I am?

MRS. S. Except that you are my son—no. Why don't you speak? (*By chair*)

WILD. For God's sake don't compel me to speak. You will learn it from lips of others. Leave me—and forget me.

(*Pause*—MRS. S. *drags him down.*)

MRS. S. Forget you—I am your mother.

WILD. When I permit myself to think of you it will be to remember that I—a common adventurer, received kindness at your hands, (*Music*) that I got into your house and went near to despoiling it.

MRS. S. (R. C.) No, my son—look at me. I am your mother. Had I been a good mother, you might hesitate to tell me what you have done. But I too have sinned—and I too have suffered. My son—I have told you my sin—tell me yours.

WILD. Go away from me—leave me—(*Rises*) You don't know who I am—you have others to love and care for—of me you will never hear again. I am Swift—the felon, the thief.

(*Warning for curtain, stand by for lights down, 3 knocks, ready pistol, ready to fire.*)

MRS. S. (*Rises*) Oh! God—my son! what shall I do? You are in danger and I must help you.

WILD. Where I am going I shall need no help. (*Crosses* L.)

MRS. S. Where are you going?

WILD. To the Never Never Land.

MRS. S. (*With awe*) What do you mean?

WILD. (*Sits*) I am going to give myself up.

MRS. S. No. no, you must not think of it. Your sins, whatever they may be, are mine—the result of my selfishness—my wickedness. You must not bear the punishment alone—it is not just. You must escape. Don't you see it would kill me? See, I beg you on my knees, For the love of God save us both, save us both! (MRS. S. *kneels and is embraced by* WILDING.)

WILD. (L. C.) Mother! Heaven help me! I could have loved you so.

MRS. S. My son, you will promise me?

WILD. Yes, I promise. I will not be taken.

(*Enter* GAR. C.)

GAR. Forgive me, but time presses. Those men will return.

MRS. S. You will help him to escape?

(*Goes up to* GARDINER R.)

GAR. I will.

(MRS. S. *moves towards door.* GARDINER *is looking through window.*)

Ah! the detective—Ryan!

MRS. S. You are lost. (*Crosses to* L. C.)

WILD. No—I have promised you—I will not be taken——

GAR. I will manage Ryan, go in there. (GARDINER *at* C. *holding curtain.* WILDING *goes up* C. *and comes down again*)

WILD. (*To* MRS. S.) Be brave, mother, remember your secret. I am the stranger you were kind to. Be brave.

(WILDING *goes up* C. *Takes* GARDINER'S *hand.*)

I'm a useless devil, Gardiner and giving you a lot of trouble.

GAR. You'll change all that.

WILD. Yes, I'll change all that.

(*Exit* C. *through curtains.* GARDINER *locks door.* MRS. S. *is* L.)

GAR. (*Coming down*) Don't be afraid.

(*Knock.*)

MR. S. (*Knocking outside*) Gardiner! Gardiner!

MRS. S. My husband's voice! He mustn't find me here. (*Crosses* R.)

GAR. Hush! he won't see you. Quick, hide behind that curtain.

(*Lights down. Turns down lamp—opens door. Enter* MR. S. GARDINER *relocks door.* L.)

MR. S. Gardiner, Gardiner. Marshall is below with two men.

GAR. (*Crosses to window*) Heavens! the detectives have left the street—we are lost!

MR. S. Lost?

GAR. Yes, Wilding is here.

MR. S. Wilding here?

GAR. Yes, in that room. What is to be done? We cannot give him up.

(*A pause.*)

MR. S. Yes, we must give him up. I would willingly have saved him if I could, but I will not allow you to

imperil your reputation, perhaps your safety, for his sake. Gardiner, open the door.

GAR. Impossible.

MR. S. Then I must—give me the key.

MRS. S. (*Aside to* GARDINER) There is only one chance. I will tell him all.

GAR. No, no, for God's sake.

(*3 Knocks.*)

MRS. S. Yes, I will, I say it is my life for his.

(*Pistol shot.*)

(MRS. S. *screams. The curtains open and* WILDING *enters one hand on his breast and in the other a pistol. He walks unsteadily* R. C.)

WILD. Hush, mother (*In a whisper to* MRS. S.) I've kept my promise, mother—hush!

(*Falls dead.*)

(*Knock.* MR. S. *starts towards* WILDING, *but* GARDINER *restrains him.*)

MR. S. Someone screamed, who was it?

GAR. A woman who loved him.

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